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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, NEW YORK

BIOGRAPHICAL EDITION

THE WRONG BOX

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

AND

LLOYD OSBOURNE

WITH A PREFACE BY MRS. STEVENSON

3125

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1912

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PREFACE

TO

THE BIOGRAPHICAL EDITION

AFTER the death of my father-in-law there was no longer any reason for my husband's continued residence in England, where the climate was too harsh for his weak lungs; my mother-in-law, besides, needed an entire change of environment after the terrible strain she had undergone. The resolution taken, we were soon ready to start for Colorado, recommended by Dr. Balfour as the most suitable place for my husband, and at the same time offering the different surroundings that were thought necessary for his mother. The only obstacle in the way of our immediate departure was the long railway journey to Liverpool, my husband not being strong enough to endure the consequent

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fatigue; it occurred to us, however, that it might be possible to find a "tramp steamer" running between London and New York, which would entail only a couple of hours railway travelling. We were fortunate enough to secure passage on the Ludgate Hill, a large, comfortable steamship, carrying, according to the agent's statement, "notions," which we afterwards discovered to consist of French horses, matches, and hay.

The Ludgate Hill made a longer passage than usual; it was a season of wild weather, and several vessels from Liverpool that took the southern route to America were wrecked; but as we ran just north of the storm belt, we escaped with nothing worse than an occasional rough sea. The improvement in my husband's health soon began to show the wisdom of our migration; he grew stronger every day, enjoying to the full every moment of the voyage. In a letter to his cousin Robert Alan Stevenson, he writes, "I was so happy on board that ship, I could not have believed it possible." The practice of his theory, "every man must earn the right to live," gave him many op

portunities for usefulness; he looked after the comfort of some desperately seasick passengers, helped the purser, who was new to the position, and even, on one occasion, when the captain was imperatively needed elsewhere, led the Sunday morning service.

In England our life had been so secluded that my husband knew little of the outside world and its estimation of his work; he was, therefore, quite unprepared for the demonstrative welcome accorded him in America. On his arrival *Jekyll and Hyde* was being played to crowded houses in New York City, and at the same time used as the basis for sermons in several churches. Publishers made him offers for work, so large that he was afraid to accept them; I remember the *New York World* proposing that he should write a series of weekly letters at what seemed to him the princely remuneration of eight thousand dollars a year. Though he refused this offer, he accepted another from the Scribners to furnish a series of "end papers" for their magazine at the same rate of payment. Not only was he now assured of the certainty of earning his livelihood by his pen,

but other possibilities began to unfold themselves before his imagination.

The stimulation of the life in New York, added to the excitement of meeting so many old and new friends, soon began to tell on the strength my husband had gained by his voyage; besides, autumn was approaching, and it was time we made our plans for the winter. We had not realized before how long the railway journey would be from New York to Colorado, and the contemplation of such a trip was so alarming that we eagerly accepted the suggestion of a friend who proposed the Adirondacks as an alternative. Leaving my husband at the house of Mrs. Charles Fairchild, in Newport, to follow later, my son and I hastened to Saranac, where we hired a cottage from a guide named Baker, engaged a cook and a boy-of-all-work from the village, and with the help of my maid set up a sort of housekeeping that was very like camp life.

The difficulty of managing a household under such primitive conditions as we had to contend with were manifold, and sometimes so unexpected

hat my mother-in-law and I would be near de-
pair. I remember one day, having just finished
meal that had caused us an immense expenditure
f energy in gathering together its component parts,
Francis, the chore-boy, casually remarked to the
ook, "It would have been better to wait for Mr.
ullivan." Eager questioning brought out the fact
hat a telegram had come that morning from Mr.
ullivan announcing his intended arrival. The tele-
ram had been read aloud to the loungers at the
ost-office, who instantly jumped to the conclusion
hat our visitor must be the pugilist, John L. Sulli-
an, who was a recent winner in a great prize fight.
n the excitement nobody thought of sending the
elegram to its legitimate destination, but hastened
o the station, where they awaited the arrival of
Mr. T. R. Sullivan for hours. The unconscious
ictim of this ludicrous mistake was surprised
nd embarrassed by the sensation he created, his
points" being audibly discussed as he passed
rough the crowd.

With the approach of winter the cold grew more
nd more intense; in spite of great log-fires, buf-

falo coats, and rugs, and the hermetical sealing of door after door and all the windows, it became almost unendurable. Our thoughts and our talk turned to the tropics, and while we shivered round our immense fireplace, we dreamed of palm-trees and Southern seas. The appreciation and generosity of American publishers having now made his long-cherished dream of a small yacht appear almost feasible, my husband sent to New York for maps and books of reference. I believe some of the happiest hours of his life were spent in the study of Findlay's directories of the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the South Seas, looking up soundings, and going into every detail of an extended cruise. Some time after his death Captain Joshua Slocum, on his way round the world alone in the little sloop Spray, came to the house at Vailima. Here, I thought, was a mariner after my husband's own heart; who had better right to the directories than this man who was about to sail those very seas with no other guide than the stars and a small, broken clock that served in place of a chronometer? Captain

Slocum received the volumes with reverence, and sed them, as he afterwards told me, to his great dvantage.

Among our visitors to Saranac came Mr. S. S. McClure, who listened with absorbing interest to ur schemes, and offered to advance the money for ne proposed yacht expedition, to be reimbursed y letters, or articles, written during the voyage. But my husband felt that in his precarious state f health he had no right to involve Mr. McClure n such a risk. Though stronger than for several ears previous, he was somewhat exhausted by his inter's work, the exigencies of the bitter climate f Saranac, and the influx of visitors, which was great, though fatiguing, pleasure to one who had een for so long cut off from almost all intercourse ith his friends. With the spring approaching, nd the time near at hand when a decision must be eached, he thought that if he could only find an asy way to make a thousand pounds he could dare enture on the yacht cruise (he had now settled n the islands north of Madagascar as an objective oint) with no fear of causing loss to another.

My son, then a lad of nineteen, had passed th winter at Saranac in the enthralling occupation o writing a novel, which he then intended to cal *A Game of Bluff*. The story finished, it wa read aloud to the family, a few chapters eac evening. It seemed to us all a rather creditabl effort for a boy of that age, and my husban remarked that it would be very easy to pull i together and "make it go." It was the that collaboration occurred to him. Here wa the chance to earn the money for the yach cruise.

A Game of Bluff, now rechristened *The Wron Box,* was overhauled and rewritten in a fe weeks with such high spirits and hilarity tha the authors began to take a higher view of it merits than they did on reading it in cold typ under other circumstances. My husband foun collaboration such an agreeable and easy metho of accomplishing work that he afterwards, i Honolulu, when unfit for more serious exertio took up another unfinished story of his stepson called *The Pearl Fisher;* but after some hal

zen chapters had been sketched out it was opped in favor of *The Ebb-Tide*.

With the coming of spring we found we must finitely make up our minds as to what course e should pursue. Leaving the family about to art for Manasquan, in New Jersey, I went to n Francisco, where I found and chartered the cht Casco for a six months' cruise. Had it t been for the ease and facility with which *The rong Box* was made ready for the press, giv- g a comfortable assurance for the future, I doubt the yacht scheme would have remained anything ore than a pleasant day-dream. Nor would my sband have found that haven in Samoa which as the means of prolonging his life, and enabling m to give to the world the best work of his aturity.

F. V. DE G. S.

PREFACE

"NOTHING like a little judicious levity," says ichael Finsbury in the text: nor can any better cuse be found for the volume in the reader's hand. ne authors can but add that one of them is old ough to be ashamed of himself, and the other ung enough to learn better.

R. L. S.

L. O.

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THE WRONG BOX

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH MORRIS SUSPECTS

HOW very little does the amateur, dwelling at home at ease, comprehend the labours and perils of the author, and, when he nilingly skims the surface of a work of fiction, ow little does he consider the hours of toil, consul-tion of authorities, researches in the Bodleian, orrespondence with learned and illegible Germans – in one word, the vast scaffolding that was first uilt up and then knocked down, to while away an our for him in a railway train! Thus I might egin this tale with a biography of Tonti — birth-lace, parentage, genius probably inherited from is mother, remarkable instance of precocity, etc. – and a complete treatise on the system to which e bequeathed his name. The material is all be-de me in a pigeon-hole, but I scorn to appear

vainglorious. Tonti is dead, and I never saw any one who even pretended to regret him; and as for the tontine system, a word will suffice for all the purposes of this unvarnished narrative.

A number of sprightly youths (the more the merrier) put up a certain sum of money, which is then funded in a pool under trustees; coming on for a century later, the proceeds are fluttered for a moment in the face of the last survivor, who is probably deaf, so that he cannot even hear of his success — and who is certainly dying, so that he might just as well have lost. The peculiar poetry and even humour of the scheme is now apparent, since it is one by which nobody concerned can possibly profit; but its fine, sportsmanlike character endeared it to our grandparents.

When Joseph Finsbury and his brother Masterman were little lads in white-frilled trousers, their father — a well-to-do merchant in Cheapside — caused them to join a small but rich tontine of seven and thirty lives. A thousand pounds was the entrance fee; and Joseph Finsbury can remember to this day the visit to the lawyer's, where the

nembers of the tontine — all children like himself — were assembled together and sat in turn in the ig office-chair, and signed their names with the ssistance of a kind old gentleman in spectacles and Wellington boots. He remembers playing with the hildren afterward on the lawn at the back of the awyer's house, and a battle royal that he had with brother tontiner, who had kicked his shins. The ound of war called forth the lawyer from where he as dispensing cake and wine to the assembled arents in the office, and the combatants were sepa-ated, and Joseph's spirit (for he was the smaller f the two) commended by the gentleman in the Wellington boots, who vowed he had been just uch another at the same age. Joseph wondered to imself if he had worn at that time little Welling-ons and a little bald head, and when (in bed at ight) he grew tired of telling himself stories of ea-fights, he used to dress himself up as the old entleman, and entertain other little boys and girls ith cake and wine.

In the year 1840 the thirty-seven were all ive; in 1850 their number had decreased by six;

in 1856 and 1857 business was more lively, for the Crimea and the Mutiny carried off no less than nine. There remained in 1870 but five of the original members, and at the date of my story, including the two Finsburys, but three.

By this time Masterman was in his seventy-third year; he had long complained of the effects of age, had long since retired from business, and now lived in absolute seclusion under the roof of his son Michael, the well-known solicitor. Joseph, on the other hand, was still up and about, and still presented but a semi-venerable figure on the streets in which he loved to wander. This was the more to be deplored, because Masterman had led (even to the least particular) a model British life. Industry, regularity, respectability, and a preference for the four per cents are understood to be the very foundations of a green old age. All these Masterman had eminently displayed, and here he was, *ab agendo,* at seventy-three; while Joseph, barely two years younger, and in the most excellent preservation, had disgraced himself through life by idleness and eccentricity. Embarked in the leather trade

He had early wearied of business, for which he was supposed to have small parts. A taste for general information, not promptly checked, had soon begun to sap his manhood. There is no passion more debilitating to the mind, unless, perhaps, it be that itch of public speaking which it not infrequently accompanies or begets. The two were conjoined in the case of Joseph; the acute stage of this double malady, that in which the patient delivers gratuitous lectures, soon declared itself with severity, and not many years had passed over his head before he would have travelled thirty miles to address an infant-school. He was no student; his reading was confined to elementary text-books and the daily papers; he did not even fly as high as cyclopædias; life, he would say, was his volume. His lectures were not meant (he would declare) for college professors; they were addressed direct to "the great heart of the people," and the heart of the people must certainly be sounder than its head, for his lucubrations were received with favour. That entitled, "How to Live Cheerfully on Forty Pounds a Year," created a sensation

among the unemployed. "Education: Its Aims, Objects, Purposes, and Desirability," gained him the respect of the shallow-minded. As for his celebrated essay on "Life Insurance Regarded in its Relation to the Masses," read before the Working Men's Mutual Improvement Society, Isle of Dogs, it was received with a "literal ovation" by an unintelligent audience of both sexes. And so marked was the effect that he was next year elected honorary president of the institution, an office of less than no emolument, since the holder was expected to come down with a donation, but one which highly satisfied his self-esteem.

While Joseph was thus building himself up a reputation among the more cultivated portion of the ignorant, his domestic life was suddenly overwhelmed by orphans. The death of his younger brother Jacob saddled him with the charge of two boys, Morris and John; and in the course of the same year his family was still further swelled by the addition of a little girl, the daughter of John Henry Hazeltine, Esq., a gentleman of small property and fewer friends. He had met Joseph only

ıce, at a lecture-hall in Holloway; but from that ɔrmative experience he returned home to make new will, and consign his daughter and her for- ıne to the lecturer. Joseph had a kindly disposi- ɔn; and yet it was not without reluctance that he ccepted this new responsibility, advertised for a ırse, and purchased a second-hand perambulator. Iorris and John he made more readily welcome; ɔt so much because of the tie of consanguinity : because the leather business (in which he has- ıed to invest their fortune of thirty thousand ɔunds) had recently exhibited inexplicable symp- ms of decline. A young but capable Scot was ıosen as manager to the enterprise, and the res of business never again afflicted Joseph insbury. Leaving his charges in the hands of e capable Scot (who was married), he began s extensive travels on the Continent and in Asia inor.

With a polyglot Testament in one hand and a ırase-book in the other, he groped his way among e speakers of eleven European languages. The st of these guides is hardly applicable to the

purposes of the philosophic traveller, and ever the second is designed more expressly for the tourist than for the expert in life. But he pressed interpreters into his service — whenever he could get their services for nothing — and by one means and another filled many note-books with the results of his researches.

In these wanderings he spent several years, and only returned to England when the increasing age of his charges needed his attention. The two lads had been placed in a good but economical school where they had received a sound commercial education; which was somewhat awkward, as the leather business was by no means in a state to court inquiry. In fact, when Joseph went over his accounts preparatory to surrendering his trust, he was dismayed to discover that his brother's fortune had not increased by his stewardship; even by making over to his two wards every penny he had in the world, there would still be a deficit of seven thousand eight hundred pounds. When these facts were communicated to the two brothers in the presence of a lawyer, Morris Finsbury threa

ned his uncle with all the terrors of the law, and as only prevented from taking extreme steps by e advice of the professional man.

"You cannot get blood from a stone," observed e lawyer.

And Morris saw the point, and came to terms ith his uncle. On the one side, Joseph gave up l that he possessed and assigned to his nephew is contingent interest in the tontine, already quite hopeful speculation. On the other, Morris agreed harbour his uncle and Miss Hazeltine (who had me to grief with the rest), and to pay to each of em one pound a month as pocket-money. The llowance was amply sufficient for the old man; scarce appears how Miss Hazeltine contrived to ress upon it; but she did, and what is more she ever complained. She was, indeed, sincerely ttached to her incompetent guardian. He had ever been unkind; his age spoke for him loudly; ere was something appealing in his whole-souled uest of knowledge and innocent delight in the nallest mark of admiration; and though the wyer had warned her she was being sacrificed,

Julia had refused to add to the perplexities of Uncle Joseph.

In a large, dreary house in John Street, Bloomsbury, these four dwelt together; a family in appearance, in reality a financial association. Julia and Uncle Joseph were, of course, slaves; John, a gentleman with a taste for the banjo, the music-hall, the Gaiety bar, and the sporting papers, must have been anywhere a secondary figure; and the cares and delights of empire devolved entirely upon Morris. That these are inextricably intermixed is one of the commonplaces with which the bland essayist consoles the incompetent and the obscure; but in the case of Morris the bitter must have largely outweighed the sweet. He grudged no trouble to himself, he spared none to others; he called the servants in the morning, he served out the stores with his own hand, he took soundings of the sherry, he numbered the remainder biscuits; painful scenes took place over the weekly bills, and the cook was frequently impeached, and the tradespeople came and hectored with him in the back parlour, upon a question of three farthings;

he superficial might have deemed him a miser; his own eyes he was simply a man who had been efrauded; the world owed him seven thousand ght hundred pounds, and he intended that the orld should pay.

But it was in his dealings with Joseph that orris's character particularly shone. His uncle as a rather gambling stock in which he had vested heavily; and he spared no pains in nurs- g the security. The old man was seen monthly a physician, whether he was well or ill. His et, his raiment, his occasional outings, now to ighton, now to Bournemouth, were doled out to m like pap to infants. In bad weather he must ep the house. In good weather, by half- st nine, he must be ready in the hall; Morris ould see that he had gloves and that his shoes ere sound; and the pair would start for the ther business arm in arm. The way there was obably dreary enough, for there was no pretence friendly feeling; Morris had never ceased to braid his guardian with his defalcation and to ment the burthen of Miss Hazeltine; and Joseph,

though he was a mild enough soul, regarded his nephew with something very near akin to hatred. But the way there was nothing to the journey back; for the mere sight of the place of business, as well as every detail of its transactions, was enough to poison life for any Finsbury.

Joseph's name was still over the door; it was he who still signed the cheques; but this was only policy on the part of Morris, and designed to discourage other members of the tontine. In reality, the business was entirely his; and he found it an inheritance of sorrows. He tried to sell it, and the offers he received were quite derisory. He tried to extend it, and it was only the liabilities he succeeded in extending; to restrict it, and it was only the profits he managed to restrict. Nobody had ever made money out of that concern except the capable Scot, who retired (after his discharge) to the neighbourhood of Banff and built a castle with his profits. The memory of this fallacious Caledonian, Morris would revile daily, as he sat in the private office opening his mail, with old Joseph at another table, sullenly awaiting

ders, or savagely affixing signatures to he knew
t what. And when the man of the heather
shed cynicism so far as to send him the an-
uncement of his second marriage (to Davida,
lest daughter of the Rev. Alexander McCraw)
was really supposed that Morris would have
d a fit.

Business hours, in the Finsbury leather trade,
d been cut to the quick; even Morris's strong
ıse of duty to himself was not strong enough
dally within those walls and under the shadow
that bankruptcy; and presently the manager and
e clerks would draw a long breath, and compose
emselves for another day of procrastination.
ıw Haste, on the authority of my Lord Tenny-
ı, is half-sister to Delay; but the Business Habits
e certainly her uncles. Meanwhile, the leather-
rchant would lead his living investment back to
ın Street like a puppy dog; and having there
mured him in the hall, would depart for the
y on the quest of seal rings, the only passion of
life. Joseph had more than the vanity of man,
had that of lecturers. He owned he was in

fault; although more sinned against (by the ca-
pable Scot) than sinning; but had he steeped his
hands in gore, he would still not deserve to be thus
dragged at the chariot-wheels of a young man, to
sit a captive in the halls of his own leather busi-
ness, to be entertained with mortifying comments
on his whole career — to have his costume exam-
ined, his collar pulled up, the presence of his mit-
tens verified, and to be taken out and brought home
in custody, like an infant with a nurse. At the
thought of it his soul would swell with venom,
and he would make haste to hang up his hat and
coat and the detested mittens, and slink up-stairs
to Julia and his note-books. The drawing-room at
least was sacred from Morris; it belonged to the
old man and the young girl; it was there that she
made her dresses; it was there that he inked his
spectacles over the registration of disconnected
facts and the calculation of insignificant statistics.

Here he would sometimes lament his connec-
tion with the tontine. "If it were not for that,"
he cried one afternoon, "he would not care
to keep me. I might be a free man, Julia

nd I could so easily support myself by giving ctures."

" To be sure you could," said she; " and I think one of the meanest things he ever did to deprive u of that amusement. There were those nice ople at the Isle of Cats (was n't it?) who wrote d asked you so very kindly to give them an dress. I did think he might have let you go to e Isle of Cats."

" He is a man of no intelligence," cried Joseph. He lives here literally surrounded by the absorb- g spectacle of life, and for all the good it does n, he might just as well be in his coffin. Think his opportunities! The heart of any other young an would burn within him at the chance. The nount of information that I have it in my power convey, if he would only listen, is a thing that ggars language, Julia."

" Whatever you do, my dear, you must n't excite urself," said Julia; " for you know, if you look all ill, the doctor will be sent for."

" That is very true," returned the old man, mbly. " I will compose myself with a little

study." He thumbed his gallery of note-books. "I wonder," he said, "I wonder (since I see your hands are occupied) whether it might not interest you ——"

"Why, of course it would," cried Julia. "Read me one of your nice stories, there 's a dear!"

He had the volume down and his spectacles upon his nose instanter, as though to forestall some possible retractation. "What I propose to read to you," said he, skimming through the pages, "is the notes of a highly important conversation with a Dutch courier of the name of David Abbas, which is the Latin for abbot. Its results are well worth the money it cost me, for as Abbas at first appeared somewhat impatient, I was induced to (what is, I believe, singularly called) stand him drink. It runs only to about five and twenty pages. Yes, here it is." He cleared his throat, and began to read.

Mr. Finsbury (according to his own report) contributed about four hundred and ninety-nine five-hundredths of the interview, and elicited from Abbas literally nothing. It was dull for Julia, who

d not require to listen; for the Dutch courier, no had to answer, it must have been a perfect ghtmare. It would seem as if he had consoled mself by frequent applications to the bottle; it uld even seem that (toward the end) he had sed to depend on Joseph's frugal generosity, d called for the flagon on his own account. The ect, at least, of some mellowing influence was ible in the record: Abbas became suddenly a lling witness; he began to volunteer disclosures; d Julia had just looked up from her seam with mething like a smile, when Morris burst into the use, eagerly calling for his uncle, and the next tant plunged into the room, waving in the air evening paper.

It was indeed with great news that he came arged. The demise was announced of Lieu-ant-General Sir Glascow Biggar, K.C.S.I., C.M.G., etc., and the prize of the tontine now between the Finsbury brothers. Here was orris's opportunity at last. The brothers had ver, it is true, been cordial. When word came t Joseph was in Asia Minor, Masterman had

expressed himself with irritation. "I call it simply indecent," he had said. "Mark my words — we shall hear of him next at the North Pole." And these bitter expressions had been reported to the traveller on his return. What was worse, Masterman had refused to attend the lecture on "Education; its aims, objects, purpose, and desirability," although invited to the platform. Since then, the brothers had not met. On the other hand, they never had openly quarrelled; Joseph (by Morris's orders) was prepared to waive the advantage of his juniority; Masterman had enjoyed all through life the reputation of a man neither greedy nor unfair. Here, then, were all the elements of compromise assembled; and Morris, suddenly beholding his seven thousand eight hundred pounds restored to him, and himself dismissed from the vicissitudes of the leather trade, hastened the next morning to the office of his cousin Michael.

Michael was something of a public character. Launched upon the law at a very early age, and quite without protectors, he had become a trafficker in shady affairs. He was known to be the man for

lost cause, it was known he could extract testi-
ıony from a stone, and interest from a gold mine;
ıd his office was besieged in consequence by all
ıat numerous class of persons who have still some
eputation to lose, and find themselves upon the
oint of losing it; by those who have made un-
esirable acquaintances, who have mislaid a com-
romising correspondence, or who are blackmailed
y their own butlers. In private life, Michael was
man of pleasure; but it was thought his dire
xperience at the office had gone far to sober him,
ıd it was known that (in the matter of invest-
ents) he preferred the solid to the brilliant.
Vhat was yet more to the purpose, he had been
l his life a consistent scoffer at the Finsbury
ntine.

It was therefore with little fear for the result
ıat Morris presented himself before his cousin,
ıd proceeded feverishly to set forth his scheme.
or near upon a quarter of an hour, the lawyer
ffered him to dwell upon its manifest advantages
ıinterrupted. Then Michael rose from his seat,
ıd ringing for his clerk, uttered a single clause.

"It won't do, Morris."

It was in vain that the leather merchant pleade and reasoned, and returned day after day to plea and reason. It was in vain that he offered a bonu of one thousand, of two thousand, of three thou sand pounds; in vain that he offered, in Joseph' name, to be content with only one-third of th pool. Still there came the same answer: "I won't do."

"I can't see the bottom of this," he said at las "You answer none of my arguments, you have n a word to say. For my part, I believe it 's malice.

The lawyer smiled at him benignly. "You ma believe one thing," said he; "whatever else I d I am not going to gratify any of your curiosit You see I am a trifle more communicative to-da because this is our last interview upon the subject

"Our last interview!" cried Morris.

"The stirrup-cup, dear boy," returned Michae "I can't have my business hours encroached upo And by-the-bye, have you no business of your ow Are there no convulsions in the leather trade?"

"I believe it to be malice," repeated Morr

oggedly. "You always hated and despised me rom a boy."

"No, no — not hated," returned Michael, sooth- ngly. "I rather like you than otherwise; there 's uch a permanent surprise about you, you look so ark and attractive from a distance. Do you know nat to the naked eye you look romantic? — like vhat they call a man with a history. And indeed, rom all that I can hear the history of the leather rade is full of incident."

"Yes," said Morris, disregarding these remarks, it 's no use coming here, I shall see your father."

"Oh, no, you won't," said Michael. "Nobody hall see my father."

"I should like to know why," cried his cousin.

"I never make any secret of that," replied the awyer. "He is too ill."

"If he is as ill as you say," cried the other, the more reason for accepting my proposal. I *vill* see him."

"Will you?" said Michael, and he rose and rang or his clerk.

It was now the time, according to Sir Faraday

Bond, the medical baronet whose name is so familiar at the foot of bulletins, that Joseph (the poor Golden Goose) should be removed into the purer air of Bournemouth; and for that unchartered wilderness of villas the family now shook off the dust of Bloomsbury: Julia delighted, because at Bournemouth she sometimes made acquaintances; John in despair, for he was a man of city tastes; Joseph indifferent where he was, so long as there was pen and ink and daily papers, and he could avoid martyrdom at the office; Morris himself, perhaps, not displeased to pretermit these visits to the city, and have a quiet time for thought. He was prepared for any sacrifice; all he desired was to get his money again and clear his feet of leather, and it would be strange, since he was so modest in his desires and the pool amounted to upward of a hundred and sixteen thousand pounds — it would be strange, indeed, if he could find no way of influencing Michael. "If I could only guess his reason," he repeated to himself; and by day, as he walked in Branksome woods, and by night, as he turned upon his bed, and at meal times, when

e forgot to eat, and in the bathing-machine, hen he forgot to dress himself, that problem as constantly before him: why had Michael efused?

At last one night, he burst into his brother's oom and woke him.

"What 's all this?" asked John.

"Julia leaves this place to-morrow," replied Morris; "she must go up to town and get the ouse ready, and find servants. We shall all follow in three days."

"Oh, brayvo!" cried John. "But why?"

"I 've found it out, John," returned his brother, ently.

"It? What?" inquired John.

"Why Michael won't compromise," said Morris. It 's because he can't. It 's because Masterman 's ead, and he 's keeping it dark."

"Golly!" cried the impressionable John. "But hat 's the use? why does he do it, anyway?"

"To defraud us of the tontine," said his brother.

"He could n't; you have to have a doctor's cer- ficate," objected John.

"Did you never hear of venal doctors?" inquired Morris. "They're as common as blackberries; you can pick 'em up for three pound ten a head."

"I would n't do it under fifty if I were a sawbones," ejaculated John.

"And then, Michael," continued Morris, "is in the very thick of it. All his clients have come to grief; his whole business is rotten eggs. If any man could arrange it, he could; and depend upon it, he has his plan all straight; and depend upon it, it 's a good one, for he 's clever, and be damned to him! But I 'm clever, too; and I 'm desperate. I lost seven thousand eight hundred pounds when I was an orphan at school."

"Oh, don't be tedious," interrupted John. "You 've lost far more already trying to get it back."

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MORRIS TAKES ACTION

SOME days later, accordingly, the three males of this depressing family might have been observed (by a reader of G. P. R. James) aking their departure from the East Station of Bournemouth. The weather was raw and changeble, and Joseph was arrayed in consequence according to the principles of Sir Faraday Bond, man no less strict (as is well known) on costume nan on diet. There are few polite invalids who ave not lived, or tried to live, by that punctilious hysician's orders. "Avoid tea, madam," the eader has doubtless heard him say, "avoid tea, ried liver, antimonial wine, and bakers' bread. Retire nightly at 10.45; and clothe yourself (if ou please) throughout in hygienic flannel. Exernally, the fur of the marten is indicated. Do ot forget to procure a pair of health boots at

Messrs. Dall & Crumbie's." And he has probably called you back, even after you have paid your fee, to add with stentorian emphasis: "I had forgotten one caution: avoid kippered sturgeon, as you would the very devil!" The unfortunate Joseph was cut to the pattern of Sir Faraday in every button; he was shod with the health boot; his suit was of genuine ventilating cloth; his shirt of hygienic flannel, a somewhat dingy fabric; and he was draped to the knees in the inevitable great-coat of marten's fur. The very railway porters at Bournemouth (which was a favourite station of the doctor's) marked the old gentleman for a creature of Sir Faraday. There was but one evidence of personal taste, a vizarded forage-cap; from this form of headpiece, since he had fled from a dying jackal on the plains of Ephesus, and weathered a bora in the Adriatic, nothing could divorce our traveller.

The three Finsburys mounted into their compartment and fell immediately to quarrelling, a step unseemly in itself and (in this case) highly unfortunate for Morris. Had he lingered a moment longer by the window, this tale need never have

en written. For he might then have observed
s the porters did not fail to do) the arrival of
second passenger in the uniform of Sir Faraday
ond. But he had other matters on hand which he
dged (God knows how erroneously) to be more
portant.

"I never heard of such a thing," he cried, re-
ming a discussion which had scarcely ceased all
orning. "The bill is not yours; it is mine."

"It is payable to me," returned the old gentle-
an, with an air of bitter obstinacy. "I will do
hat I please with my own property."

The bill was one for eight hundred pounds,
hich had been given him at breakfast to endorse,
d which he had simply pocketed.

"Hear him, Johnny!" cried Morris. "His
operty! the very clothes upon his back belong
me."

"Let him alone," said John, "I 'm sick of both
you."

"That is no way to speak of your uncle, sir,"
ied Joseph. "I will not endure this disrespect.
ou are a pair of exceedingly forward, impudent,

and ignorant young men, and I have quite made up my mind to put an end to the whole business."

"Oh, skittles!" said the graceful John.

But Morris was not so easy in his mind. This unusual act of insubordination had already troubled him, and these mutinous words now sounded ominously in his ears. He looked at the old gentleman uneasily. Upon one occasion many years before, when Joseph was delivering a lecture, the audience had revolted in a body; finding their entertainer somewhat dry, they had taken the question of amusement into their own hands; and the lecturer (along with the board schoolmaster, the Baptist clergyman, and a working-man's candidate, who made up his bodyguard) was ultimately driven from the scene. Morris had not been present on that fatal day; if he had, he would have recognised a certain fighting glitter in his uncle's eye, and a certain chewing movement of his lips, as old acquaintances. But even to the inexpert these symptoms breathed of something dangerous.

"Well, well," said Morris. "I have no wish to bother you further till we get to London."

Joseph did not so much as look at him in swer; with tremulous hands he produced a copy the *British Mechanic,* and ostentatiously buried nself in its perusal.

"I wonder what can make him so cantanker-s?" reflected the nephew. "I don't like the look it at all." And he dubiously scratched his nose. The train travelled forth into the world, bearing ng with it the customary freight of obliterated yagers, and along with these old Joseph, affect-g immersion in his paper, and John, slumbering er the columns of the *Pink Un,* and Morris, re-lving in his mind a dozen grudges, and suspi-ns, and alarms. It passed Christ Church by the , Herne with its pinewoods, Ringwood on its zy river. A little behind time, but not much for South Western, it drew up at the platform of tation, in the midst of the New Forest, the real ne of which (in case the railway company ight have the law of me") I shall veil under alias of Browndean.

Many passengers put their heads to the window, among the rest an old gentleman on whom I

willingly dwell, for I am nearly done with him now, and (in the whole course of the present narrative) I am not in the least likely to meet another character so decent. His name is immaterial, not so his habits. He had passed his life wandering in a tweed suit on the continent of Europe; and years of *Galignani's Messenger* having at length undermined his eyesight, he suddenly remembered the rivers of Assyria and came to London to consult an oculist. From the oculist to the dentist, and from both to the physician, the step appears inevitable; presently he was in the hands of Sir Faraday, robed in ventilating cloth and sent to Bournemouth; and to that domineering baronet (who was his only friend upon his native soil) he was now returning to report. The case of these tweed-suited wanderers is unique. We have all seen them entering the table d'hôte (at Spezzia, or Grätz, or Venice) with a genteel melancholy and a faint appearance of having been to India and not succeeded; in the offices of many hundred hotels, they are known by name; and yet, if the whole of this wandering cohort were to disappear

-morrow, their absence would be wholly unre-
arked. How much more, if only one — say this
ne in the ventilating cloth — should vanish! He
ad paid his bills at Bournemouth; his worldly
ffects were all in the van in two portmanteaus,
nd these after the proper interval would be sold
s unclaimed baggage to a Jew; Sir Faraday's
utler would be a half-crown poorer at the year's
nd, and the hotel-keepers of Europe about the
me date would be mourning a small but quite
bservable decline in profits. And that would be
erally all. Perhaps the old gentleman thought
mething of the sort, for he looked melancholy
ough as he pulled his bare, grey head back into
e carriage, and the train smoked under the bridge
nd forth, with ever-quickening speed, across the
ingled heaths and woods of the New Forest.

Not many hundred yards beyond Browndean,
wever, a sudden jarring of brakes set everybody's
eth on edge, and there was a brutal stoppage.
orris Finsbury was aware of a confused uproar
voices, and sprang to the window. Women
ere screaming, men were tumbling from the

windows on the track, the guard was crying to them to stay where they were; at the same time the train began to gather way and move very slowly backward toward Browndean; and the next moment, all these various sounds were blotted out in the apocalyptic whistle and the thundering onslaught of the down express.

The actual collision Morris did not hear. Perhaps he fainted. He had a wild dream of having seen the carriage double up and fall to pieces like a pantomime trick; and sure enough, when he came to himself, he was lying on the bare earth and under the open sky. His head ached savagely; he carried his hand to his brow and was not surprised to see it red with blood. The air was filled with an intolerable, throbbing roar, which he expected to find die away with the return of consciousness; and instead of that it seemed but to swell the louder and to pierce the more cruelly through his ears. It was a raging, bellowing thunder, like a boiler-riveting factory.

And now curiosity began to stir, and he sat up and looked about him. The track at this point ran

a sharp curve about a wooded hillock; all of
e near side was heaped with the wreckage of
e Bournemouth train; that of the express was
ostly hidden by the trees; and just at the turn,
der clouds of vomiting steam and piled about
th cairns of living coal, lay what remained of
e two engines, one upon the other. On the
athy margin of the line were many people
nning to and fro, and crying aloud as they ran,
d many others lying motionless like sleeping
mps.

Morris suddenly drew an inference. "There
s been an accident!" thought he, and was elated
his perspicacity. Almost at the same time his
e lighted on John, who lay close by as white as
per. "Poor old John! poor old cove!" he
ought, the schoolboy expression popping forth
om some forgotten treasury, and he took his
other's hand in his with childish tenderness. It
s perhaps the touch that recalled him; at least
hn opened his eyes, sat suddenly up, and after
veral ineffectual movements of his lips, "What 's
e row?" said he, in a phantom voice.

The din of that devil's smithy still thundered in their ears. "Let us get away from that," Morris cried, and pointed to the vomit of steam that still spouted from the broken engines. And the pair helped each other up, and stood and quaked and wavered and stared about them at the scene of death.

Just then they were approached by a party of men who had already organized themselves for the purposes of rescue.

"Are you hurt?" cried one of these, a young fellow with the sweat streaming down his pallid face, and who by the way he was treated was evidently the doctor.

Morris shook his head, and the young man nodding grimly, handed him a bottle of some spirit.

"Take a drink of that," he said, "your friend looks as if he needed it badly. We want every man we can get," he added; "there's terrible work before us, and nobody should shirk. If you can do no more you can carry a stretcher."

The doctor was hardly gone before Morris

der the spur of the dram, awoke to the full ssession of his wits.

"My God!" he cried. "Uncle Joseph!"

"Yes," said John, "where can he be? He can't far off. I hope the old party is n't damaged."

"Come and help me to look," said Morris, with snap of savage determination strangely foreign his ordinary bearing; and then, for one moment, broke forth. "If he 's dead!" he cried, and ook his fist at heaven.

To and fro the brothers hurried, staring in the ces of the wounded, or turning the dead upon eir backs. They must have thus examined forty ople, and still there was no word of Uncle seph. But now the course of their search ought them near the centre of the collision, here the boilers were still blowing off steam with deafening clamour. It was a part of the field t yet gleaned by the rescuing party. The ground, pecially on the margin of the wood, was full of equalities — here a pit, there a hillock surmounted th a bush of furze. It was a place where many dies might lie concealed, and they beat it like

pointers after game. Suddenly Morris, who wa leading, paused and reached forth his index wit a tragic gesture. John followed the direction o his brother's hand.

In the bottom of a sandy hole lay something tha had once been human. The face had suffere severely, and it was unrecognisable; but that wa not required. The snowy hair, the coat of marten the ventilating cloth, the hygienic flannel — every thing down to the health boots from Messrs. Dal & Crumbie's, identified the body as that of Uncl Joseph. Only the forage cap must have bee lost in the convulsion, for the dead man wa bareheaded.

"The poor old beggar!" said John, with a touc of natural feeling; "I would give ten pounds w had n't chivied him in the train!"

But there was no sentiment in the face of Morri as he gazed upon the dead. Gnawing his nail with introverted eyes, his brow marked with th stamp of tragic indignation and tragic intellectua effort, he stood there silent. Here was a last in justice; he had been robbed while he was a

phan at school, he had been lashed to a decaent leather business, he had been saddled with Miss Hazeltine, his cousin had been defrauding him of the tontine, and he had borne all this, we might almost say, with dignity, and now they had gone and killed his uncle!

"Here!" he said, suddenly, "take his heels, we must get him into the woods. I 'm not going to have anybody find this."

"O, fudge!" said John, "where 's the use?"

"Do what I tell you," spirted Morris, as he took the corpse by the shoulders. "Am I to carry him myself?"

They were close upon the borders of the wood; in ten or twelve paces they were under cover; and a little farther back, in a sandy clearing of the trees, they laid their burthen down, and stood and looked at it with loathing.

"What do you mean to do?" whispered John.

"Bury him, to be sure!" responded Morris, and he opened his pocket knife and began feverishly to dig.

"You 'll never make a hand of it with that," objected the other.

"If you won't help me, you cowardly shirk," screamed Morris, "you can go to the devil!"

"It 's the childishest folly," said John, "but no man shall call me a coward," and he began to help his brother grudgingly.

The soil was sandy and light, but matted with the roots of the surrounding firs. Gorse tore their hands; and as they baled the sand from the grave, it was often discoloured with their blood. An hour passed of unremitting energy upon the part of Morris, of lukewarm help on that of John; and still the trench was barely nine inches in depth. Into this the body was rudely flung; sand was piled upon it, and then more sand must be dug, and gorse had to be cut to pile on that; and still from one end of the sordid mound a pair of feet projected and caught the light upon their patent-leather toes. But by this time the nerves of both were shaken; even Morris had enough of his grisly task; and they skulked off like animals into the thickest of the neighbouring covert.

"It 's the best that we can do," said Morris, ting down.

"And now," said John, "perhaps you 'll have e politeness to tell me what it 's all about."

"Upon my word," cried Morris, "if you do t understand for yourself, I almost despair of ling you."

"Oh, of course it 's some rot about the tontine," urned the other. "But it 's the merest non- ıse. We 've lost it, and there 's an end."

"I tell you," said Morris, "Uncle Masterman dead. I know it, there 's a voice here that tells : so."

"Well, and so is Uncle Joseph," said John.

"He 's not dead unless I choose," returned ɔrris.

"And come to that," cried John, "if you 're ht, and Uncle Masterman 's been dead ever so g, all we have to do is to tell the truth and ɔose Michael."

"You seem to think Michael is a fool," sneered ɔrris. "Can't you understand he 's been pre- ing this fraud for years? He has the whole

thing ready: the nurse, the doctor, the undertaker, all bought, the certificate all ready but the date! Let him get wind of this business and you mark my words, Uncle Masterman will die in two days and be buried in a week. But see here Johnny; what Michael can do, I can do. If he plays a game of bluff, so can I. If his father is to live for ever, by God, so shall my uncle!"

"It 's illegal, ain't it?" said John.

"A man must have *some* moral courage," replied Morris with dignity.

"And then suppose you 're wrong? suppose Uncle Masterman 's alive and kicking?"

"Well, even then," responded the plotter, "we are no worse than we were before; in fact, we 're better. Uncle Masterman must die some day; as long as Uncle Joseph was alive, he might have died any day; but we 're out of all that trouble now: there 's no sort of limit to the game that I propose — it can be kept up till Kingdom Come."

"If I could only see how you meant to set about it!" sighed John. "But you know, Morris, you always were such a bungler."

"I 'd like to know what I ever bungled," cried orris; "I have the best collection of signet rings London."

"Well, you know, there 's the leather business," ggested the other. "That 's considered rather hash."

It was a mark of singular self-control in Morris at he suffered this to pass unchallenged and even resented.

"About the business in hand," said he, "once e can get him up to Bloomsbury, there 's no sort trouble. We bury him in the cellar, which seems ade for it; and then all I have to do is to start ut and find a venal doctor."

"Why can't we leave him where he is?" asked hn.

"Because we know nothing about the country," torted Morris. "This wood may be a regular vers' walk. Turn your mind to the real diffilty. How are we to get him up to Bloomsbury?"

Various schemes were mooted and rejected. he railway station at Browndean was of course ut of the question; for it would now be a centre

of curiosity and gossip, and (of all things) they would be least able to despatch a dead body without remark. John feebly proposed getting an ale-cask and sending it as beer, but the objections to this course were so overwhelming that Morris scorned to answer. The purchase of a packing-case seemed equally hopeless; for why should two gentlemen without baggage of any kind require a packing-case? They would be more likely to require clean linen.

"We are working on wrong lines," cried Morris at last. "The thing must be gone about more carefully. Suppose, now," he added, excitedly, speaking by fits and starts as if he were thinking aloud, "suppose we rent a cottage by the month: a householder can buy a packing-case without remark. Then suppose we clear the people out to-day, get the packing-case to-night, and to-morrow I hire a carriage — or a cart that we could drive ourselves — and take the box, or whatever we get to Ringwood or Lyndhurst or somewhere, we could label it 'specimens,' don't you see? — Johnny, I believe I've hit the nail at last."

"Well, it sounds more feasible," admitted John.

"Of course, we must take assumed names," continued Morris. "It would never do to keep our own. What do you say to 'Masterman' itself? sounds quiet and dignified."

"I will *not* take the name of Masterman," returned his brother; "you may, if you like. I shall call myself Vance — the Great Vance; positively the last six nights. There 's some go in a name like that."

"Vance!" cried Morris. "Do you think we are playing a pantomime for our amusement? There was never anybody named Vance who was n't a music-hall singer."

"That 's the beauty of it," returned John, "it gives you some standing at once. You may call yourself Fortescue till all 's blue, and nobody cares; but to be Vance gives a man a natural stability."

"But there 's lots of other theatrical names," replied Morris. "Leybourne, Irving, Brough, Poole ——"

"Devil a one will I take," returned his brother,

"I am going to have my little lark out of this as well as you."

"Very well," said Morris, who perceived that John was determined to carry his point, "I shall be Robert Vance."

"And I shall be George Vance," cried John, "the only original George Vance! Rally round the only original!"

Repairing as well as they were able the disorder of their clothes, Finsbury brothers returned to Browndean by a circuitous route in quest of luncheon and a suitable cottage. It is not always easy to drop at a moment's notice on a furnished residence in a retired locality; but fortune presently introduced our adventurers to a deaf carpenter, a man rich in cottages of the required description, and unaffectedly eager to supply their wants. The second place they visited, standing as it did, about a mile and a half from any neighbours, caused them to exchange a glance of hope. On a nearer view the place was not without depressing features. It stood in a marshy-looking hollow of a heath; tall trees obscured its windows

: thatch visibly rotted on the rafters; and the lls were stained with splashes of unwholesome een. The rooms were small, the ceilings low, : furniture merely nominal; a strange chill and naunting smell of damp pervaded the kitchen; d the bedroom boasted only of one bed.

Morris, with a view to cheapening the place, marked on this defect.

"Well," returned the man, "if you can't sleep o abed, you 'd better take a villa residence."

"And then," pursued Morris, "there 's no ter; how do you get your water?"

"We fill *that* from the spring," replied the carter, pointing to a big barrel that stood beside e door. "The spring ain't so *very* far off, after , and it 's easy brought in buckets. There 's a cket there."

Morris nudged his brother as they examined the ter-butt; it was new, and very solidly conucted for its office; if anything had been want- to decide them, this eminently practicable rrel would have turned the scale. A bargain s promptly struck, the month's rent was paid

upon the nail, and about an hour later Finsbur brothers might have been observed returnin to the blighted cottage, having along with the the key, which was the symbol of their tenancy, spirit-lamp, with which they fondly told them selves they would be able to cook, a pork-pie o suitable dimensions, and a quart of the wors whisky in Hampshire. Nor was this all they ha effected; already (under the plea that they wer landscape-painters) they had hired for dawn o the morrow a light but solid two-wheeled cart so that, when they entered in their new characte they were able to tell themselves that the back c the business was already broken.

John proceeded to get tea; while Morris, fo aging about the house, was presently delighte by discovering the lid of the water-butt upon th kitchen shelf. Here, then, was the packing-cas complete; in the absence of straw, the blanke (which he himself, at least, had not the smalle intention of using for their present purpose would exactly take the place of packing; an Morris, as the difficulties began to vanish fro

s path, rose almost to the brink of exultation. here was, however, one difficulty not yet faced, e upon which his whole scheme depended. ould John consent to remain alone in the ttage? He had not yet dared to put the estion.

It was with high good-humour that the pair sat wn to the deal table, and proceeded to fall to on e pork-pie. Morris retailed the discovery of e lid, and the Great Vance was pleased to ap- aud by beating on the table with his fork in true usic-hall style.

"That 's the dodge," he cried. "I always said water-butt was what you wanted for this siness."

"Of course," said Morris, thinking this a fa- urable opportunity to prepare his brother, "of urse you must stay on in this place till I give the ord; I 'll give out that uncle is resting in the ew Forest. It would not do for both of us to pear in London; we could never conceal the sence of the old man."

John's jaw dropped.

"Oh, come!" he cried. "You can stay in thi hole yourself. I won't."

The colour came into Morris's cheeks. He sav that he must win his brother at any cost.

"You must please remember, Johnny," he said "the amount of the tontine. If I succeed, w shall have each fifty thousand to place to our banl account; ay, and nearer sixty."

"But if you fail," returned John, "what then What 'll be the colour of our bank account in tha case?"

"I will pay all expenses," said Morris, with a inward struggle; "you shall lose nothing."

"Well," said John, with a laugh, "if the ex- are yours, and half profits mine, I don't mind re maining here for a couple of days."

"A couple of days!" cried Morris, who wa beginning to get angry and controlled himself wit difficulty. "Why, you would do more to win fiv pounds on a horse race!"

"Perhaps I would," returned the Great Vance "it 's the artistic temperament."

"This is monstrous!" burst out Morris. "

ze all risks; I pay all expenses; I divide
ofits; and you won't take the slightest pains to
lp me. It 's not decent; it 's not honest; it 's
t even kind."

"But suppose," objected John, who was con-
erably impressed by his brother's vehemence,
uppose that Uncle Masterman is alive after all,
d lives ten years longer; must I rot here all
at time?"

"Of course not," responded Morris, in a more
nciliatory tone. "I only ask a month at the
tside; and if Uncle Masterman is not dead by
at time you can go abroad."

"Go abroad?" repeated John, eagerly. "Why
ould n't I go at once? Tell 'em that Joseph and
are seeing life in Paris."

"Nonsense," said Morris.

"Well, but look here," said John; "it 's this
use, it 's such a pig-sty, it 's so dreary and damp.
ou said yourself that it was damp."

"Only to the carpenter," Morris distinguished,
nd that was to reduce the rent. But really you
ow, now we 're in it, I 've seen worse."

"And what am I to do?" complained the victim. "How can I entertain a friend?"

"My dear Johnny, if you don't think the tontine worth a little trouble, say so; and I'll give the business up."

"You're dead certain of the figures, I suppose?" asked John. "Well" — with a deep sigh — "send me the *Pink Un* and all the comic papers regularly. I'll face the music."

As afternoon drew on, the cottage breathed more thrillingly of its native marsh; a creeping chill inhabited its chambers; the fire smoked; and a shower of rain, coming up from the Channel on a slant of wind, tingled on the window-panes. At intervals, when the gloom deepened towards despair, Morris would produce the whisky bottle and at first John welcomed the diversion — not for long. It has been said this spirit was the worst in Hampshire; only those acquainted with the county can appreciate the force of that superlative; and at length even the Great Vance (who was no connoisseur) waved the decoction from his lips. The approach of dusk, feebly combated with

ngle tallow candle, added a touch of tragedy; nd John suddenly stopped whistling through his ngers — an art to the practice of which he ad been reduced — and bitterly lamented his ncessions.

"I can't stay here a month," he cried. "No ne could. The thing 's nonsense, Morris. The arties that lived in the Bastille would rise against place like this."

With an admirable affectation of indifference, Iorris proposed a game of pitch-and-toss. To hat will not the diplomatist condescend! It was ohn's favourite game; indeed, his only game — e had found all the rest too intellectual — and he layed it with equal skill and good fortune. To Iorris himself, on the other hand, the whole busi- ess was detestable; he was a bad pitcher, he had o luck in tossing, and he was one who suffered orments when he lost. But John was in a danger- us humour, and his brother was prepared for any acrifice.

By seven o'clock, Morris, with incredible agony, ad lost a couple of half-crowns. Even with the

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tontine before his eyes, this was as much as he could bear; and remarking that he would take his revenge some other time, he proposed a bit of supper and a grog.

Before they had made an end of this refreshment, it was time to be at work. A bucket of water for present necessities was withdrawn from the water-butt, which was then emptied and rolled before the kitchen fire to dry; and the two brothers set forth on their adventure under a starless heaven.

CHAPTER III

THE LECTURER AT LARGE

WHETHER mankind is really partial to happiness is an open question. Not a month passes by, but some cherished on runs off into the merchant service, or some alued husband decamps to Texas with a lady elp; clergymen have fled from their parishioners; nd even judges have been known to retire. To n open mind, it will appear (upon the whole) less trange that Joseph Finsbury should have been d to entertain ideas of escape. His lot (I think e may say) was not a happy one. My friend, Ir. Morris, with whom I travel up twice or rice a week from Snaresbrook Park, is certainly gentleman whom I esteem; but he was scarce a odel nephew. As for John, he is of course an xcellent fellow; but if he was the only link that ound one to a home, I think the most of us would

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vote for foreign travel. In the case of Joseph, John (if he were a link at all) was not the only one; endearing bonds had long enchained the old gentleman to Bloomsbury; and by these expressions I do not in the least refer to Julia Hazeltine (of whom, however, he was fond enough), but to that collection of manuscript note-books in which his life lay buried. That he should ever have made up his mind to separate himself from these collections, and go forth upon the world with no other resources than his memory supplied, is a circumstance highly pathetic in itself, and but little creditable to the wisdom of his nephews.

The design, or at least the temptation, was already some months old; and when a bill for eight hundred pounds, payable to himself, was suddenly placed in Joseph's hand, it brought matters to an issue. He retained that bill, which, to one of his frugality, meant wealth; and he promised himself to disappear among the crowds at Waterloo, or (if that should prove impossible) to slink out of the house in the course of the evening and melt like a dream into the millions of London. By

culiar interposition of Providence and railway ismanagement, he had not so long to wait.

He was one of the first to come to himself and ramble to his feet, after the Browndean catas- ophe, and he had no sooner remarked his pros- ate nephews, than he understood his opportunity nd fled. A man of upward of seventy, who has st met with a railway accident, and who is umbered besides with the full uniform of Sir araday Bond, is not very likely to flee far, but the ood was close at hand and offered the fugitive least a temporary covert. Hither, then, the old entleman skipped with extraordinary expedition, nd being somewhat winded and a good deal aken, here he lay down in a convenient grove nd was presently overwhelmed by slumber. The ay of fate is often highly entertaining to the oker-on, and it is certainly a pleasant circum- ance, that while Morris and John were delving in e sand to conceal the body of a total stranger, eir uncle lay in dreamless sleep a few hundred rds deeper in the wood.

He was awakened by the jolly note of a bugle

from the neighbouring highroad, where a char-à-banc was bowling by with some belated tourists. The sound cheered his old heart, it directed his steps into the bargain, and soon he was on the highway, looking east and west from under his vizor, and doubtfully revolving what he ought to do. A deliberate sound of wheels arose in the distance, and then a cart was seen approaching, well filled with parcels, driven by a good-natured-looking man on a double bench, and displaying on a board the legend, "I. Chandler, carrier." In the infamously prosaic mind of Mr. Finsbury certain streaks of poetry survived and were still efficient; they had carried him to Asia Minor as a giddy youth of forty, and now, in the first hours of his recovered freedom, they suggested to him the idea of continuing his flight in Mr. Chandler's cart. It would be cheap; properly broached, it might even cost nothing, and after years of mittens and hygienic flannel, his heart leaped out to meet the notion of exposure.

Mr. Chandler was perhaps a little puzzled to find so old a gentleman, so strangely clothed, and

gging for a lift on so retired a roadside. But
: was a good-natured man, glad to do a service,
ıd so he took the stranger up; and he had his
vn idea of civility, and so he asked no questions.
lence, in fact, was quite good enough for Mr.
ıandler; but the cart had scarcely begun to
ove forward ere he found himself involved in a
ıe-sided conversation.

"I can see," began Mr. Finsbury, "by the
ixture of parcels and boxes that are contained in
ur cart, each marked with its individual label,
ıd by the good Flemish mare you drive, that
ou occupy the post of carrier in that great English
stem of transport, which, with all its defects, is
e pride of our country."

"Yes, sir," returned Mr. Chandler vaguely, for
e hardly knew what to reply, "them parcels'
sts has done us carriers a world of harm."

"I am not a prejudiced man," continued Joseph
insbury. "As a young man I travelled much.
othing was too small or too obscure for me to
quire. At sea I studied seamanship, learned
e complicated knots employed by mariners, and

acquired the technical terms. At Naples, I would learn the art of making macaroni; at Nice, the principles of making candied fruit. I never went to the opera without first buying the book of the piece, and making myself acquainted with the principal airs by picking them out on the piano with one finger."

"You must have seen a deal, sir," remarked the carrier, touching up his horse; "I wish I could have had your advantages."

"Do you know how often the word whip occurs in the Old Testament?" continued the old gentleman. "One hundred and (if I remember exactly) forty-seven times."

"Do it indeed, sir?" said Mr. Chandler. "I never should have thought it."

"The Bible contains three million five hundred and one thousand two hundred and forty-nine letters. Of verses I believe there are upward of eighteen thousand. There have been many editions of the Bible; Wiclif was the first to introduce it into England, about the year 1300. The 'Paragraph Bible,' as it is called, is a well-known edition

id is so called because it is divided into para-
aphs. The 'Breeches Bible' is another well-
own instance, and gets its name either because
was printed by one Breeches, or because the
ace of publication bore that name."

The carrier remarked drily that he thought
at was only natural, and turned his attention
the more congenial task of passing a cart of
y; it was a matter of some difficulty, for the
ad was narrow, and there was a ditch on either
nd.

"I perceive," began Mr. Finsbury, when they
d successfully passed the cart, "that you hold
ur reins with one hand; you should employ two."

"Well, I like that!" cried the carrier, contemp-
ously. "Why?"

"You do not understand," continued Mr. Fins-
ry. "What I tell you is a scientific fact, and
poses on the theory of the lever, a branch of
echanics. There are some very interesting little
illing-books upon the field of study, which I
ould think a man in your station would take a
easure to read. But I am afraid you have not

cultivated the art of observation; at least we have now driven together for some time, and I cannot remember that you have contributed a single fact. This is a very false principle, my good man. For instance, I do not know if you observed that (as you passed the hay-cart man) you took your left?"

"Of course I did," cried the carrier, who was now getting belligerent; "he'd have the law on me if I had n't."

"In France, now," resumed the old man, "and also, I believe, in the United States of America, you would have taken the right."

"I would not," cried Mr. Chandler, indignantly. "I would have taken the left."

"I observe," again continued Mr. Finsbury, scorning to reply, "that you mend the dilapidated parts of your harness with string. I have always protested against this carelessness and slovenliness of the English poor. In an essay that I once read before an appreciative audience ——"

"It ain't string," said the carrier, sullenly, "it 's packthread."

"I have always protested," resumed the old
an, "that in their private and domestic life, as
ll as in their labouring career, the lower classes
this country are improvident, thriftless, and
travagant. A stitch in time——"

"Who the devil *are* the lower classes?" cried
e carrier. "You are the lower classes yourself!
I thought you were a blooming aristocrat I
ould n't have given you a lift."

The words were uttered with undisguised ill-
eling; it was plain the pair were not congenial,
d further conversation, even to one of Mr.
nsbury's pathetic loquacity, was out of the ques-
n. With an angry gesture he pulled down the
im of the forage-cap over his eyes, and pro-
cing a note-book and a blue pencil from one
his innermost pockets, soon became absorbed in
culations.

On his part the carrier fell to whistling with
sh zest; and if (now and again) he glanced at
e companion of his drive, it was with mingled
lings of triumph and alarm — triumph because
had succeeded in arresting that prodigy of

speech, and alarm lest (by any accident) it shoul
begin again. Even the shower, which presentl
overtook and passed them, was endured by both i
silence; and it was still in silence that they drov
at length into Southampton.

Dusk had fallen; the shop windows glimmere
forth into the streets of the old seaport; in privat
houses lights were kindled for the evening meal
and Mr. Finsbury began to think complacentl
of his night's lodging. He put his papers by
cleared his throat, and looked doubtfully at Mr
Chandler.

"Will you be civil enough," said he, "to recom
mend me to an inn?"

Mr. Chandler pondered for a moment.

"Well," he said at last, "I wonder how abou
the 'Tregonwell Arms.'"

"The 'Tregonwell Arms' will do very well,
returned the old man, "if it's clean and cheap
and the people civil."

"I was n't thinking so much of you," returne
Mr. Chandler, thoughtfully. "I was thinking o
my friend Watts as keeps the 'ouse; he 's a frien

mine, you see, and he helped me through my
ouble last year. And I was thinking, would it
fair-like on Watts to saddle him with an old
rty like you, who might be the death of him
th general information. Would it be fair to
e 'ouse?" inquired Mr. Chandler, with an air
candid appeal.

"Mark me," cried the old gentleman, with
rit. "It was kind in you to bring me here
nothing, but it gives you no right to address
e in such terms. Here's a shilling for your
ouble; and if you do not choose to set me
wn at the 'Tregonwell Arms,' I can find it for
rself."

Chandler was surprised and a little startled;
ttering something apologetic, he returned the
lling, drove in silence through several intricate
es and small streets, drew up at length before
e bright windows of an inn, and called loudly
"Mr. Watts."

"Is that you, Jem?" cried a hearty voice from
e stable-yard. "Come in and warm yourself."

"I only stopped here," Mr. Chandler explained,

"to let down an old gent what wants food an lodging. Mind, I warn you agin him; he 's wors nor a temperance lecturer."

Mr. Finsbury dismounted with difficulty, fo he was cramped with his long drive, and th shaking he had received in the accident. Th friendly Mr. Watts, in spite of the carter's scarcel agreeable introduction, treated the old gentlema with the utmost courtesy, and led him into th back parlour, where there was a big fire burnin in the grate. Presently a table was spread in th same room, and he was invited to seat himsel before a stewed fowl — somewhat the worse fo having seen service before — and a big pewte mug of ale from the tap.

He rose from supper a giant refreshed; an changing his seat to one nearer the fire, began t examine the other guests with an eye to the de lights of oratory. There were near a dozen presen all men, and (as Joseph exulted to perceive) a working-men. Often already had he seen caus to bless that appetite for disconnected fact an rotatory argument, which is so marked a cha

er of the mechanic. But even an audience working-men has to be courted, and there was man more deeply versed in the necessary arts an Joseph Finsbury. He placed his glasses on nose, drew from his pocket a bundle of papers, d spread them before him on a table. He crum-d them, he smoothed them out; now he mmed them over, apparently well pleased with eir contents; now, with tapping pencil and con-cted brows, he seemed maturely to consider some rticular statement. A stealthy glance about the om assured him of the success of his manœu-es; all eyes were turned on the performer, ouths were open, pipes hung suspended; the birds re charmed. At the same moment the entrance Mr. Watts afforded him an opportunity.

"I observe," said he, addressing the landlord, t taking at the same time the whole room into confidence with an encouraging look, "I ob-ve that some of these gentlemen are looking th curiosity in my direction; and certainly it unusual to see any one immersed in literary and entific labours in the public apartment of an

inn. I have here some calculations I made thi
morning upon the cost of living in this and othe
countries — a subject, I need scarcely say, highl
interesting to the working classes. I have calcu
lated a scale of living for incomes of eighty, on
hundred and sixty, two hundred, and two hun
dred and forty pounds a year. I must confes
that the income of eighty pounds has somewha
baffled me, and the others are not so exact as
could wish; for the price of washing varies largel
in foreign countries, and the different cokes, coal
and firewoods fluctuate surprisingly. I will rea
my researches, and I hope you won't scruple t
point out to me any little errors that I may hav
committed either from oversight or ignoranc
I will begin, gentlemen, with the income of eight
pounds a year."

Whereupon the old gentleman, with less con
passion than he would have had for brute beast
delivered himself of all his tedious calculation
As he occasionally gave ten versions of a sing
income, placing the imaginary person in Londo
Paris, Bagdad, Spitzbergen, Bassorah, Helig

d, the Scilly Islands, Brighton, Cincinnati, and
ni-Novgorod, with an appropriate outfit for
h locality, it is no wonder that his hearers look
k on that evening as the most tiresome they
r spent.

Long before Mr. Finsbury had reached Nijni-
vgorod with the income of one hundred and
y pounds, the company had dwindled and faded
ay to a few old topers and the bored but affable
tts. There was a constant stream of customers
m the outer world, but so soon as they were
ved they drank their liquor quickly, and de-
ted with the utmost celerity for the next public-
se.

By the time the young man with two hundred a
r was vegetating in the Scilly Islands, Mr.
tts was left alone with the economist; and
t imaginary person had scarce commenced life
Brighton before the last of his pursuers desisted
m the chase.

Mr. Finsbury slept soundly after the manifold
gues of the day. He rose late, and after a
d breakfast, ordered the bill. Then it was

that he made a discovery which has been mad by many others, both before and since: that it i one thing to order your bill, and another to dis charge it. The items were moderate and (wha does not always follow) the total small; but afte the most sedulous review of all his pockets, on and ninepence halfpenny appeared to be the tota of the old gentleman's available assets. He aske to see Mr. Watts.

"Here is a bill on London for eight hundre pounds," said Mr. Finsbury, as that worthy ap peared. "I am afraid unless you choose to dis count it yourself, it may detain me a day or tw till I can get it cashed."

Mr. Watts looked at the bill, turned it ove and dogseared it with his fingers. "It will kee you a day or two?" he said, repeating the ol man's words. "You have no other money wit you?"

"Some trifling change," responded Josep "Nothing to speak of."

"Then you can send it me; I should be please to trust you."

"To tell the truth," answered the old gentleman, "I am more than half inclined to stay; I in need of funds."

"If a loan of ten shillings would help you, it at your service," responded Watts, with gerness.

"No, I think I would rather stay," said the d man, "and get my bill discounted."

"You shall not stay in my house," cried Mr. Watts. "This is the last time you shall have a ed at the 'Tregonwell Arms.'"

"I insist upon remaining," replied Mr. Finsury, with spirit; "I remain by Act of Parliament; turn me out if you dare."

"Then pay your bill," said Mr. Watts.

"Take that," cried the old man, tossing him e negotiable bill.

"It is not legal tender," replied Mr. Watts. You must leave my house at once."

"You cannot appreciate the contempt I feel for ou, Mr. Watts," said the old gentleman, resigning mself to circumstances. "But you shall feel it one way; I refuse to pay my bill."

"I don't care for your bill," responded Mr Watts. "What I want is your absence."

"That you shall have!" said the old gentleman, and taking up his forage-cap as he spoke, he crammed it on his head. "Perhaps you are too insolent," he added, "to inform me of the time of the next London train?"

"It leaves in three-quarters of an hour," returned the innkeeper, with alacrity. "You can easily catch it."

Joseph's position was one of considerable weakness. On the one hand, it would have been well to avoid the direct line of railway, since it was there he might expect his nephews to lie in wait for his recapture; on the other, it was highly desirable, it was even strictly needful, to get the bill discounted ere it should be stopped. To London, therefore, he decided to proceed on the first train, and there remained but one point to be considered, how to pay his fare.

Joseph's nails were never clean, he ate almost entirely with his knife. I doubt if you could say he had the manners of a gentleman; but he had

itter than that, a touch of genuine dignity. as it from his stay in Asia Minor? Was it from strain in the Finsbury blood sometimes alluded by customers? At least, when he presented mself before the station-master, his salaam was ily oriental, palm-trees appeared to crowd out the little office, and the simoom or the bul- l — but I leave this image to persons better quainted with the East. His appearance, be- des, was highly in his favour; the uniform of r Faraday, however inconvenient and conspicu- s, was, at least, a costume in which no swindler uld have hoped to prosper; and the exhibition a valuable watch and a bill for eight hundred unds completed what deportment had begun. uarter of an hour later, when the train came up, r. Finsbury was presented to the guard and in- alled in a first-class compartment, the station- aster smilingly assuming all responsibility.

As the old gentleman sat waiting the moment departure, he was the witness of an incident rangely connected with the fortunes of his house. packing-case of cyclopean bulk was borne along

the platform by some dozen of tottering porters and ultimately, to the delight of a considerabl crowd, hoisted on board the van. It is often th cheering task of the historian to direct attentio to the designs and (if it may be reverently said the artifices of Providence. In the luggage van as Joseph was borne out of the station of South ampton East upon his way to London, the eg of this romance lay (so to speak) unhatched. Th huge packing-case was directed "to lie at Wate loo till called for," and addressed to one "Wi liam Dent Pitman"; and the very next articl a goodly barrel jammed into the corner of th van, bore the superscription "M. Finsbury, 1 John Street, Bloomsbury. Carriage paid."

In this juxtaposition, the train of powder wa prepared; and there was now wanting only an id hand to fire it off.

CHAPTER IV

HE MAGISTRATE IN THE LUGGAGE VAN

THE city of Winchester is famed for a cathedral, a bishop — but he was unfortunately killed some years ago while rid- g — a public school, a considerable assortment the military, and the deliberate passage of the ains on the London and South Western line. hese and many similar associations would have ubtless crowded on the mind of Joseph Finsbury; t his spirit had at that time flitted from the ilway compartment to a heaven of populous cture-halls and endless oratory. His body, in the eanwhile, lay doubled on the cushions, the rage-cap rakishly tilted back after the fashion those that lie in wait for nursery-maids, the or old face quiescent, one arm clutching to his art *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*.

To him, thus unconscious, enter and exeunt

again a pair of voyagers. These two had saved the train and no more. A tandem urged to its last speed, an act of something closely bordering on brigandage at the ticket office, and a spasm of running, had brought them on the platform just as the engine uttered its departing snort. There was but one carriage easily within their reach; and they had sprung into it, and the leader and elder already had his feet upon the floor, when he observed Mr. Finsbury.

"Good God!" he cried, "Uncle Joseph! This 'll never do."

And he backed out, almost upsetting his companion, and once more closed the door upon the sleeping patriarch.

The next moment the pair had jumped into the baggage van.

"What 's the row about your uncle Joseph?" inquired the younger traveller, mopping his brow. "Does he object to smoking?"

"I don't know that there 's anything the row with him," returned the other. "He 's by no means the first comer, my uncle Joseph, I can tell

ou! Very respectable old gentleman; interested
leather; been to Asia Minor; no family, no
sets — and a tongue, my dear Wickham, sharper
an a serpent's tooth."

"Cantankerous old party, eh?" suggested
Vickham.

"Not in the least," cried the other; "only a
an with a solid talent for being a bore; rather
neery, I dare say, on a desert island, but on a
ailway journey, insupportable. You should hear
m on Tonti, the ass that started tontines. He's
credible on Tonti."

"By Jove!" cried Wickham, "then you're one
these Finsbury tontine fellows. I hadn't a
ess of that."

"Ah!" said the other, "do you know, that old
y in the carriage is worth a hundred thousand
unds to me? There he was asleep, and nobody
ere but you! But I spared him, because I'm a
nservative in politics."

Mr. Wickham, pleased to be in a luggage van,
as flitting to and fro like a gentlemanly butterfly.
"By Jingo!" he cried, "here's something for

you! 'M. Finsbury, 16 John Street, Bloomsbury London.' M. stands for Michael, you sly dog; you keep two establishments, do you?"

"Oh, that 's Morris," responded Michael from the other end of the van, where he had found a comfortable seat upon some sacks. "He 's a little cousin of mine. I like him myself, because he 's afraid of me. He 's one of the ornaments of Bloomsbury, and has a collection of some kind — birds' eggs or something — that 's supposed to be curious. I bet it 's nothing to my clients!"

"What a lark it would be to play billy with the labels!" chuckled Mr. Wickham. "By George here 's a tack-hammer! We might send all these things skipping about the premises like what 's his-name!"

At this moment the guard, surprised by the sound of voices, opened the door of his little cabin.

"You had best step in here, gentlemen," said he when he had heard their story.

"Won't you come, Wickham?" asked Michael.

"Catch me — I want to travel in a van," replied the south.

And so the door of communication was closed; d for the rest of the run Mr. Wickham was alone over his diversions on the one side, d on the other Michael and the guard were seted together in familiar talk.

'I can get you a compartment here, sir," ob-ved the official, as the train began to slacken ed before Bishopstoke station. "You had best out at my door, and I can bring your friend." Mr. Wickham, whom we left (as the reader shrewdly suspected) beginning to "play billy" h the labels in the van, was a young gentleman much wealth, a pleasing but sandy exterior, and highly vacant mind. Not many months before, had contrived to get himself black-mailed by family of a Wallachian Hospodar, resident for itical reasons in the gay city of Paris. A com-n friend (to whom he had confided his distress) ommended him to Michael; and the lawyer s no sooner in possession of the facts, than he tantly assumed the offensive, fell on the flank the Wallachian forces, and in the inside of three s, had the satisfaction to behold them routed

and fleeing for the Danube. It is no business o ours to follow them on this retreat, over which th police were so obliging as to preside paternally Thus relieved from what he loved to refer to a the Bulgarian Atrocity, Mr. Wickham returned t London with the most unbounded and embarrass ing gratitude and admiration for his saviour These sentiments were not repaid either in kin or degree; indeed, Michael was a trifle ashamed o his new client's friendship; it had taken man invitations to get him to Winchester and Wickhar Manor; but he had gone at last, and was no returning. It has been remarked by some jud cious thinker (possibly J. F. Smith) that Prov dence despises to employ no instrument, howeve humble; and it is now plain to the dullest that bot Mr. Wickham and the Wallachian Hospodar wer liquid lead and wedges in the hand of destiny.

Smitten with the desire to shine in Michael eyes and show himself a person of original humou and resources, the young gentleman (who wa a magistrate, more by token, in his native county was no sooner alone in the van, than he fell upo

labels with all the zeal of a reformer; and
en he rejoined the lawyer at Bishopstoke, his
e was flushed with his exertions, and his cigar,
ch he had suffered to go out, was almost
en in two.

"By George, but this has been a lark!" he
d. "I've sent the wrong thing to everybody
England. These cousins of yours have a pack-
-case as big as a house. I've muddled the
ole business up to that extent, Finsbury, that if
vere to get out, it's my belief we should be
ched."

t was useless to be serious with Mr. Wickham.
ake care," said Michael. "I am getting tired
our perpetual scrapes; my reputation is begin-
g to suffer."

Your reputation will be all gone before you
sh with me," replied his companion, with a
. "Clap it in the bill, my boy. 'For total
of reputation, six and eightpence.' But," con-
ed Mr. Wickham, with more seriousness,
uld I be bowled out of the Commission for this
e jest? I know it's small, but I like to be a

J. P. Speaking as a professional man, do yo think there 's any risk?"

"What does it matter?" responded Michae "They 'll chuck you out sooner or later. Som how you don't give the effect of being a goo magistrate."

"I only wish I was a solicitor," retorted h companion, "instead of a poor devil of a countr gentleman. Suppose we start one of those to tine affairs ourselves; I to pay five hundred year, and you to guarantee me against every mi fortune except illness or marriage."

"It strikes me," remarked the lawyer with meditative laugh, as he lighted a cigar; "it strik me that you must be a cursed nuisance in th world of ours."

"Do you really think so, Finsbury?" respond the magistrate, leaning back in his cushions, d lighted with the compliment. "Yes, I suppose am a nuisance. But mind you, I have a stake the country: don't forget that, dear boy."

CHAPTER V

:. GIDEON FORSYTH AND THE GIGANTIC BOX

T has been mentioned that at Bournemouth Julia sometimes made acquaintances; it is true she had but a glimpse of them before e doors of John Street closed again upon its otives, but the glimpse was sometimes exhilarat-g, and the consequent regret was tempered with pe. Among those whom she had thus met a ar before, was a young barrister of the name of deon Forsyth.

About three o'clock of the eventful day when e magistrate tampered with the labels, a some-at moody and distempered ramble had carried r. Forsyth to the corner of John Street; and out the same moment Miss Hazeltine was called the door of No. 16 by a thundering double ock.

Mr. Gideon Forsyth was a happy enough youn man; he would have been happier if he had ha more money and less uncle. One hundred an twenty pounds a year was all his store; but h uncle, Mr. Edward Hugh Bloomfield, supple mented this with a handsome allowance and great deal of advice, couched in language tha would probably have been judged intemperate o board a pirate ship. Mr. Bloomfield was indeed figure quite peculiar to the days of Mr. Gladstone what we may call (for the lack of an accepte expression) a Squirradical. Having acquired yea without experience, he carried into the radical sid of politics those noisy, after dinner-table passion which we are more accustomed to connect wit toryism in its severe and senile aspects. To th opinions of Mr. Bradlaugh, in fact, he added th temper and the sympathies of that extinct anima the Squire. He admired pugilism, he carried formidable oaken staff, he was a reverent churc man, and it was hard to know which would hav more volcanically stirred his choler — a perso who should have defended the established churc

one who should have neglected to attend its lebrations. He had besides some levelling catch-ords, justly dreaded in the family circle; and nen he could not go so far as to declare a step n-English, he might still (and with hardly less fect) denounce it as Unpractical. It was under e ban of this lesser excommunication that Gideon d fallen. His views on the study of law had en pronounced unpractical; and it had been in-mated to him, in a vociferous interview punctu-ed with the oaken staff, that he must either take new start and get a brief or two, or prepare to ve on his own money.

No wonder if Gideon was moody. He had not e slightest wish to modify his present habits; t he would not stand on that, since the recall Mr. Bloomfield's allowance would revolutionise em still more radically. He had not the least sire to acquaint himself with law; he had looked to it already, and it seemed not to repay atten-on; but upon this also he was ready to give way. fact, he would go as far as he could to meet e views of his uncle, the Squirradical. But there

was one part of the programme that appeared i dependent of his will. How to get a brief? the was the question. And there was another and worse. Suppose he got one, should he prove t better man?

Suddenly he found his way barred by a crow A garishly illuminated van was backed against t kerb; from its open stern, half resting on t street, half supported by some glistening athlet the end of the largest packing-case in the coun of Middlesex might have been seen protrudin while on the steps of the house, the burly pers of the driver and the slim figure of a young g stood as upon a stage, disputing.

"It is not for us," the girl was saying. beg you to take it away; it could n't get into t house, even if you managed to get it out of t van."

"I shall leave it on the pavement, then, a M. Finsbury can arrange with the Vestry as likes," said the van-man.

"But I am not M. Finsbury," expostulated t girl.

"It does n't matter who you are," said the n-man.

"You must allow me to help you, Miss Hazel- ie," said Gideon, putting out his hand.

Julia gave a little cry of pleasure. "Oh, Mr. orsyth," she cried, "I am so glad to see you; e must get this horrid thing, which can only ave come here by mistake, into the house. The an says we 'll have to take off the door, or nock two of our windows into one, or be fined the Vestry or Custom House or something, r leaving our parcels on the pavement."

The men, by this time, had successfully removed e box from the van, had plumped it down on the avement, and now stood leaning against it, or azing at the door of No. 16, in visible physical stress and mental embarrassment. The windows the whole street had filled, as if by magic, with terested and entertained spectators.

With as thoughtful and scientific an expression he could assume, Gideon measured the doorway ith his cane, while Julia entered his observations a drawing-book. He then measured the box,

and, upon comparing his data, found that the was just enough space for it to enter. Nex throwing off his coat and waistcoat, he assiste the men to take the door from its hinges. An lastly, all by-standers being pressed into the se vice, the packing-case mounted the steps upo some fifteen pairs of wavering legs — scrape loudly grinding, through the doorway — and w deposited at length, with a formidable convulsio in the far end of the lobby, which it almost blocke The artisans of this victory smiled upon each oth as the dust subsided. It was true they had smash a bust of Apollo and ploughed the wall into de ruts; but, at least, they were no longer one of t public spectacles of London.

"Well, sir," said the van-man, "I never s such a job."

Gideon eloquently expressed his concurrence this sentiment by pressing a couple of sovereig in the man's hand.

"Make it three, sir, and I'll stand Sam everybody here!" cried the latter; and this ha ing been done, the whole body of volunteer porte

warmed into the van, which drove off in the direction of the nearest reliable public-house. Gideon closed the door on their departure and turned to Julia: their eyes met; the most uncontrollable mirth seized upon them both, and they made the house ring with their laughter. Then curiosity woke in Julia's mind, and she went and examined the box, and more especially the label.

"This is the strangest thing that ever happened," she said, with another burst of laughter. It is certainly Morris's handwriting, and I had a letter from him only this morning telling me to expect a barrel. Is there a barrel coming, too, do you think, Mr. Forsyth?"

"Statuary with Care, Fragile," read Gideon aloud from the painted warning on the box. Then you were told nothing about this?"

"No," responded Julia. "Oh, Mr. Forsyth, don't you think we might take a peep at it?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Gideon. "Just let me have a hammer."

"Come down, and I'll show you where it is," cried Julia, "the shelf is too high for me to

reach"; and, opening the door of the kitchen stair, she bade Gideon follow her. They found both a hammer and a chisel; but Gideon was surprised to see no sign of a servant. He also discovered that Miss Hazeltine had a very pretty little foot and ankle; and the discovery embarrassed him so much that he was glad to fall at once upon the packing-case.

He worked hard and earnestly, and dealt his blows with the precision of a blacksmith; Julia the while standing silently by his side and regarding rather the workman than the work. He was a handsome fellow, she told herself; she had never seen such beautiful arms. And suddenly, as though he had overheard these thoughts, Gideon turned and smiled to her. She, too, smiled and coloured; and the double change became her so prettily that Gideon forgot to turn away his eyes and, swinging the hammer with a will, discharged a smashing blow on his own knuckles. With admirable presence of mind he crushed down an oath and substituted the harmless comment, "butter fingers!" But the pain was sharp, his nerve

was shaken, and after an abortive trial he found he must desist from further operations.

In a moment Julia was off to the pantry, in a moment she was back again with a basin of water and a sponge, and had begun to bathe his wounded hand.

"I am dreadfully sorry," said Gideon, apologetically. "If I had had any manners I should have opened the box first, and smashed my hand afterward. It feels much better," he added. "I assure you it does."

"And now I think you are well enough to direct operations," said she. "Tell me what to do, and I'll be your workman."

"A very pretty workman," said Gideon, rather forgetting himself. She turned and looked at him, with a suspicion of a frown; and the indiscreet young man was glad to direct her attention to the packing-case. The bulk of the work had been accomplished; and presently Julia had burst through the last barrier and disclosed a zone of straw. In a moment they were kneeling side by side, engaged like haymakers; the next they were rewarded

with a glimpse of something white and polished and the next again, laid bare an unmistakabl marble leg.

"He is surely a very athletic person," sai Julia.

"I never saw anything like it," responde Gideon. "His muscles stand out like penny rolls.

Another leg was soon disclosed, and then wha seemed to be a third. This resolved itself, how ever, into a knotted club resting upon a pedestal.

"It is a Hercules," cried Gideon; "I migh have guessed that from his calf. I 'm supposed t be rather partial to statuary, but when it comes t Hercules, the police should interfere. I shoul say," he added, glancing with disaffection at th swollen leg, "that this was about the biggest an the worst in Europe. What in heaven's name ca have induced him to come here?"

"I suppose nobody else would have a gift o him," said Julia. "And for that matter, I thin we could have done without the monster ver well."

"Oh, don't say that," returned Gideon. "Th

s been one of the most amusing experiences of y life."

"I don't think you 'll forget it very soon," said lia. "Your hand will remind you."

"Well, I suppose I must be going," said Gideon, luctantly.

"No," pleaded Julia. "Why should you? Stay d have tea with me."

"If I thought you really wished me to stay," id Gideon, looking at his hat, "of course I ould only be too delighted."

"What a silly person you must take me for!" turned the girl. "Why, of course I do; and sides I want some cakes for tea, and I 've no- dy to send. Here is the latch-key."

Gideon put on his hat with alacrity, and casting e look at Miss Hazeltine and another at the gs of Hercules, threw open the door and de- rted on his errand.

He returned with a large bag of the choicest and ost tempting of cakes and tartlets, and found lia in the act of spreading a small tea-table in e lobby.

"The rooms are all in such a state," she cried, "that I thought we should be more cosy and comfortable in our own lobby, and under our own vine and statuary."

"Ever so much better," cried Gideon, delightedly.

"Oh, what adorable cream tarts!" said Julia, opening the bag, "and the dearest little cherry tartlets, with all the cherries spilled out into the cream!"

"Yes," said Gideon, concealing his dismay, "I knew they would mix beautifully; the woman behind the counter told me so."

"Now," said Julia, as they began their little festival, "I am going to show you Morris's letter; read it aloud, please; perhaps there 's something I have missed."

Gideon took the letter, and spreading it out on his knee, read as follows:

"DEAR JULIA: I write you from Browndean, where we are stopping over for a few days. Uncle was much shaken in that dreadful accident, of which, I dare say, you have seen the account. To-morrow I leave him here with John, and come up

one; but before that you will have received a barrel *containing specimens for a friend.* Do not open it on any account, but leave it in the lobby till I come.

"Yours in haste,

"M. FINSBURY.

"P. S. — Be sure and leave the barrel in the lobby."

"No," said Gideon, "there seems to be nothing about the monument," and he nodded as he spoke to the marble legs. "Miss Hazeltine," he continued, "would you mind me asking a few questions?"

"Certainly not," replied Julia; "and if you can make me understand why Morris has sent a statue of Hercules instead of a barrel containing specimens for a friend, I shall be grateful till my dying day. And what are specimens for a friend?"

"I haven't a guess," said Gideon. "Specimens are usually bits of stone, but rather smaller than our friend the monument. Still, that is not the point. Are you quite alone in this big house?"

"Yes, I am at present," returned Julia. "I came up before them to prepare the house, and

get another servant. But I could n't get one I liked."

"Then you are utterly alone," said Gideon in amazement. "Are you not afraid?"

"No," responded Julia, stoutly. "I don't see why I should be more afraid than you would be; I am weaker, of course, but when I found I must sleep alone in the house, I bought a revolver wonderfully cheap, and made the man show me how to use it."

"And how do you use it?" demanded Gideon, much amused at her courage.

"Why," said she, with a smile, "you pull the little trigger thing on top, and then pointing it very low, for it springs up as you fire, you pull the underneath little trigger thing, and it goes off as well as if a man had done it."

"And how often have you used it?" asked Gideon.

"Oh, I have not used it yet," said the determined young lady; "but I know how, and that makes me wonderfully courageous, especially when I barricade my door with a chest of drawers."

"I 'm awfully glad they are coming back soon," id Gideon. "This business strikes me as exces- vely unsafe; if it goes on much longer, I could rovide you with a maiden aunt of mine, or my ndlady, if you preferred."

"Lend me an aunt!" cried Julia. "Oh, what enerosity! I begin to think it must have been ou that sent the Hercules."

"Believe me," cried the young man, "I admire ou too much to send you such an infamous work art."

Julia was beginning to reply, when they were th startled by a knocking at the door.

"Oh, Mr. Forsyth!"

"Don't be afraid, my dear girl," said Gideon, ying his hand tenderly on her arm.

"I know it 's the police," she whispered. "They e coming to complain about the statue."

The knock was repeated. It was louder than fore, and more impatient.

"It 's Morris," cried Julia, in a startled voice, d she ran to the door and opened it.

It was indeed Morris that stood before them;

not the Morris of ordinary days, but a wild-looking fellow, pale and haggard, with blood-shot eyes and a two days' beard upon his chin.

"The barrel!" he cried. "Where 's the barrel that came this morning?" and he stared about the lobby, his eyes, as they fell upon the legs of Hercules, literally goggling in his head. "What is that?" he screamed. "What is that wax-work? Speak, you fool! What is that? and where 's the barrel — the water-butt?"

"No barrel came, Morris," responded Julia coldly. "This is the only thing that has arrived."

"This!" shrieked the miserable man. "I never heard of it!"

"It came addressed in your hand," replied Julia, "we had nearly to pull the house down to get it in, and that is all that I can tell you."

Morris gazed at her in utter bewilderment. He passed his hand over his forehead, he leaned against the wall like a man about to faint. Then his tongue was loosed, and he overwhelmed the girl with torrents of abuse. Such fire, such directness, such a choice of ungentlemanly language

ne had ever before suspected Morris to possess; d the girl trembled and shrank before his fury.

"You shall not speak to Miss Hazeltine in that y," said Gideon sternly. "It is what I will not ffer."

"I shall speak to the girl as I like," returned orris, with a fresh outburst of anger. "I 'll eak to the hussy as she deserves."

"Not a word more, sir, not one word," cried deon. "Miss Hazeltine," he continued, address- g the young girl, "you cannot stay a moment nger in the same house with this unmanly fel- w. Here is my arm, let me take you where you ll be secure from insult."

"Mr. Forsyth," returned Julia, "you are right, cannot stay here longer, and I am sure I trust rself to an honourable gentleman."

Pale and resolute, Gideon offered her his arm, d the pair descended the steps, followed by orris clamouring for the latch-key.

Julia had scarcely handed the key to Morris fore an empty hansom drove smartly into John reet. It was hailed by both men, and as the

cabman drew up his restive horse, Morris mad
a dash into the vehicle.

"Sixpence above fare," he cried, recklessly
"Waterloo station for your life. Sixpence fo
yourself!"

"Make it a shilling, Guv'ner," said the man
with a grin, "the other parties were first."

"A shilling then," cried Morris, with the in
ward reflection that he would reconsider it a
Waterloo. The man whipped up his horse, an
the hansom vanished from John Street.

CHAPTER VI

HE TRIBULATIONS OF MORRIS: PART THE FIRST

AS the hansom span through the streets of London, Morris sought to rally the forces of his mind. The water-butt with the ad body had miscarried, and it was essential to cover it. So much was clear; and if, by some est good-fortune, it was still at the station, all ght be well. If it had been sent out, however, it were already in the hands of some wrong rson, matters looked more ominous. People no receive unexplained packages are usually en to have them open; the example of Miss azeltine (whom he cursed again) was there to mind him of the circumstance; and if any one d opened the water-butt — "O, Lord," cried orris at the thought, and carried his hand to s damp forehead. The private conception of

any breach of law is apt to be inspiriting, for th scheme (while yet inchoate) wears dashing an attractive colours. Not so in the least, that pa of the criminal's later reflections which deal wit the police. That useful corps (as Morris no began to think) had scarce been kept sufficientl in view when he embarked upon his enterpris "I must play devilish close," he reflected, and h was aware of an exquisite thrill of fear in th region of the spine.

"Main line, or loop?" inquired the cabma through the scuttle.

"Main line," replied Morris, and mentally d cided that the man should have his shilling aft all. "It would be madness to attract attention, thought he. "But what this thing will cost m first and last, begins to be a nightmare!"

He passed through the booking-office and wa dered disconsolately on the platform. It was breathing space in the day's traffic; there we few people there, and these for the most pa quiescent on the benches. Morris seemed to a tract no remark, which was a good thing; but, c

ıe other hand, he was making no progress in his uest. Something must be done, something must e risked; every passing instant only added to is dangers. Summoning all his courage, he topped a porter, and asked him if he remembered eceiving a barrel by the morning train; he was nxious to get information, for the barrel belonged o a friend. "It is a matter of some moment," e added, "for it contains specimens."

"I was not here this morning, sir," responded ne porter, somewhat reluctantly, "but I'll ask Bill. Do you recollect, Bill, to have got a barel from Bournemouth this morning containing pecimens?"

"I don't know about specimens," replied Bill; but the party as received the barrel I mean, aised a sight of trouble."

"What's that?" cried Morris, in the agitation f the moment, pressing a penny into the man's and.

"You see, sir, the barrel arrived at one thirty; o one claimed it till about three, when a small, ckly-looking gentleman (probably a curate) came

up, and sez he, 'Have you got anything for Pitman,' or 'Will'm Bent Pitman,' if I recollect right. 'I don't exactly know,' sez I, 'but I rather fancy that there barrel bears that name.' The little man went up to the barrel, and seemed regularly all took aback when he saw the address, and then he pitched into us for not having brought what he wanted. 'I don't care a damn what you want,' sez I to him, 'but if you are Will'm Bent Pitman, there 's your barrel.'"

"Well, and did he take it?" cried the breathless Morris.

"Well, sir," returned Bill, "it appears it was a packing-case he was after. The packing-case came; that 's sure enough, because it was about the biggest packing-case ever I clapped eyes on. And this Pitman he seemed a good deal cut up, and he had the superintendent out, and they got hold of the van-man — him as took the packing-case. Well, sir," continued Bill, with a smile, "I never see a man in such a state; everybody about that van was mortal, bar the horses. Some gen'leman (as well as I could make out) had

en the van-man a sov; and so that was where trouble come in, you see."

"But what did he say?" gasped Morris.

"I don't know as he *said* much, sir," said Bill. But he offered to fight this Pitman for a pot beer. He had lost his book, too, and the receipts; l his men were all as mortal as himself. Oh, y were all like —" and Bill paused for a simile "like lords! the superintendent sacked them the spot."

"Oh, come, but that 's not so bad," said Morris, h a bursting sigh. "He could n't tell where took the packing-case, then?"

"Not he," said Bill, "nor yet nothink else."

"And what — what did Pitman do?" asked rris.

"Oh, he went off with the barrel in a four-eeler, very trembling like," replied Bill. "I n't believe he 's a gentleman as has good lth."

"Well, so the barrel 's gone," said Morris, half himself.

"You may depend on that, sir," returned the

porter. "But you had better see the superi
tendent."

"Not in the least, it's of no account," sa
Morris. "It only contained specimens." And
walked hastily away.

Ensconced once more in a hansom, he proceed
to reconsider his position. Suppose (he thought
suppose he should accept defeat and declare h
uncle's death at once? He should lose the tontin
and with that the last hope of his seven thousa
eight hundred pounds. But on the other han
since the shilling to the hansom cabman, he h
begun to see that crime was expensive in its cours
and since the loss of the water-butt, that it w
uncertain in its consequences. Quietly at first, a
then with growing heat, he reviewed the advantag
of backing out. It involved a loss; but (come
think of it) no such great loss after all; only th
of the tontine, which had been always a toss
which at bottom he had never really expecte
He reminded himself of that eagerly; he congra
lated himself upon his constant moderation.
had never really expected the tontine; he had ne

en very definitely hoped to recover his seven
ousand eight hundred pounds; he had been hur-
ed into the whole thing by Michael's obvious dis-
nesty. Yes, it would probably be better to draw
ck from this high-flying venture, settle back on
e leather business ——

"Great God!" cried Morris, bounding in the
nsom like a Jack-in-the-box. "I have not only
t gained the tontine — I have lost the leather
siness!"

Such was the monstrous fact. He had no power
sign; he could not draw a check for thirty
illings; until he could produce legal evidence
his uncle's death, he was a penniless outcast —
d as soon as he produced it he had lost the
ntine! There was no hesitation on the part of
orris; to drop the tontine like a hot chestnut,
concentrate all his forces on the leather busi-
ss and the rest of his small but legitimate
heritance, was the decision of a single instant.
nd the next, the full extent of his calamity
as suddenly disclosed to him. Declare his
ncle's death? He could n't! Since the body

was lost, Joseph had (in a legal sense) becom immortal.

There was no created vehicle big enough to con tain Morris and his woes. He paid the hansom of and walked on he knew not whither.

"I seem to have gone into this business wit too much precipitation," he reflected, with a deadl sigh. "I fear it seems too ramified for a perso of my powers of mind."

And then a remark of his uncle's flashed int his memory: If you want to think clearly, put i all down on paper. "Well, the old boy knew thing or two," said Morris. "I will try; but don't believe the paper was ever made that wi clear my mind."

He entered a place of public entertainmen ordered bread and cheese, and writing-material and sat down before them heavily. He tried th pen; it was an excellent pen, but what was he t write? "I have it," cried Morris. "Robinso Crusoe and the double columns!" He prepare his paper after that classic model and began a follows:

Bad.	*Good.*
I have lost my uncle's body.	1. But then Pitman has found it.

"Stop a bit," said Morris, "I am letting the irit of antithesis run away with me. Let 's art again."

Bad.	*Good.*
I have lost my uncle's body.	1. But then I no longer require to bury it.
I have lost the tontine.	2. But I may still save that if Pitman disposes of the body, and if I can find a physician who will stick at nothing.
I have lost the leather business and the rest of my uncle's succession.	3. But not if Pitman gives the body up to the police.

"Oh, but in that case I go to jail; I had forgot at," thought Morris. "Indeed, I don't know at I had better dwell on that hypothesis at all; 's all very well to talk of facing the worst; but in case of this kind, a man's first duty is to his own rve. Is there any answer to No. 3? Is there y possible good side to such a beastly bungle? here must be, of course, or where would be

the use of this double-entry business? And — by George, I have it!" he exclaimed; "it's exactly the same as the last!" And he hastily rewrote the passage.

Bad.	*Good.*
3. I have lost the leather business and the rest of my uncle's succession.	3. But not if I can find a physician who will stick at nothing.

"This venal doctor seems quite a desideratum," he reflected. "I want him first to give me a certificate that my uncle is dead, so that I may get the leather business; and then that he's alive — but here we are again at the incompatible interests!" And he returned to his tabulation.

Bad.	*Good.*
4. I have almost no money.	4. But there is plenty in the bank.
5. Yes, but I can't get the money in the bank.	5. But — well, that seems unhappily to be the case.
6. I have left the bill for eight hundred pounds in Uncle Joseph's pocket.	6. But if Pitman is only a dishonest man, the presence of this bill may lead him to keep the whole thing dark and throw the body into the New Cut.

Bad.	*Good.*
Yes, but if Pitman is dishonest and finds the bill, he will know who Joseph is, and he may blackmail me.	7. Yes, but if I am right about Uncle Masterman, I can blackmail Michael.
But I can't blackmail Michael (which is, besides, a very dangerous thing to do) until I find out.	8. Worse luck!
The leather business will soon want money for current expenses, and I have none to give.	9. But the leather business is a sinking ship.
Yes, but it 's all the ship I have.	10. A fact.
John will soon want money, and I have none to give.	11.
And the venal doctor will want money down.	12.
And if Pitman is dishonest and don't send me to jail, he will want a fortune.	13.

'Oh, this seems to be a very one-sided business," claimed Morris. "There 's not so much in this thod as I was led to think." He crumpled the per up and threw it down; and then, the next

moment, picked it up again and ran it over. "
seems it 's on the financial point that my position
weakest," he reflected. "Is there positively
way of raising the wind? In a vast city like th
and surrounded by all the resources of civilisatio
it seems not to be conceived! Let us have no mo
precipitation. Is there nothing I can sell? M
collection of signet ——" But at the thought
scattering these beloved treasures, the blood leap
into Morris's cheek. "I would rather die!"
exclaimed, and cramming his hat upon his hea
strode forth into the streets.

"I *must* raise funds," he thought. "My unc
being dead, the money in the bank is mine;
would be mine, but for the cursed injustice that h
pursued me ever since I was an orphan in a Co
mercial Academy. I know what any other ma
would do; any other man in Christendom wou
forge; although I don't know why I call it forgin
either, when Joseph 's dead, and the funds a
my own. When I think of that, when I thi
that my uncle is really as dead as mutton, a
that I can't prove it, my gorge rises at t

ustice of the whole affair. I used to feel erly about that seven thousand eight hundred nds; it seems a trifle now! Dear me, why, day before yesterday I was comparatively py."

And Morris stood on the sidewalk and heaved ther sobbing sigh.

"Then there 's another thing," he resumed; an I? Am I able? Why did n't I practise dif- ent handwritings while I was young? How a ow regrets those lost opportunities when he ws up! But there 's one comfort: it 's not rally wrong; I can try it on with a clear con- nce, and even if I was found out, I would n't atly care — morally, I mean. And then, if I ceed, and if Pitman is staunch — there 's noth- to do but find a venal doctor; and that ought be simple enough in a place like London. all accounts the town 's alive with them. It uld n't do, of course, to advertise for a corrupt sician; that would be impolitic. No, I suppose ellow has simply to spot along the streets for a lamp and herbs in the window, and then you go

in and — and — and put it to him plainly; thoug
it seems a delicate step."

He was near home now, after many devio
wanderings, and turned up John Street. As
thrust his latch-key in the lock, another mortifyi
reflection struck him to the heart.

"Not even this house is mine till I can prove hi
dead," he snarled, and slammed the door behi
him so that the windows in the attic rattled.

Night had long fallen; long ago the lamps a
the shop-fronts had begun to glitter down t
endless streets; the lobby was pitch-dark; and,
the devil would have it, Morris barked his shi
and sprawled all his length over the pedestal
Hercules. The pain was sharp; his temper w
already thoroughly undermined; by a last m
fortune his hand closed on the hammer as he fe
and, in a spasm of childish irritation, he turn
and struck at the offending statue. There was
splintering crash.

"O Lord, what have I done next?" wail
Morris; and he groped his way to find a cand
"Yes," he reflected, as he stood with the light

: hand and looked upon the mutilated leg, from
nich about a pound of muscle was detached.
Yes, I have destroyed a genuine antique; I may
in for thousands!" And then there sprung
in his bosom a sort of angry hope. "Let me
e," he thought. "Julia 's got rid of; there 's
thing to connect me with that beast, Forsyth;
e men were all drunk, and (what 's better)
ey 've been all discharged. Oh, come, I think
is is another case for moral courage! I 'll deny
knowledge of the thing."

A moment more, and he stood again before the
ercules, his lips sternly compressed, the coal-axe
d the meat-cleaver under his arm. The next, he
d fallen upon the packing-case. This had been
eady seriously undermined by the operations of
deon; a few well-directed blows, and it already
aked and gaped; yet a few more, and it fell
out Morris in a shower of boards followed by
avalanche of straw.

And now the leather merchant could behold
e nature of his task; and at the first sight his
irit quailed. It was, indeed, no more ambitious

a task for De Lesseps, with all his men an horses, to attack the hills of Panama, than fo a single, slim young gentleman, with no previou experience of labour in a quarry, to measure him self against that bloated monster on his pedestal And yet the pair were well encountered: on th one side, bulk — on the other, genuine heroi fire.

"Down you shall come, you great big ugl brute!" cried Morris aloud, with something o that passion which swept the Parisian mob agains the walls of the Bastille. "Down you shall come this night. I 'll have none of you in my lobby."

The face, from its indecent expression, had par ticularly animated the zeal of our iconoclast; an it was against the face that he began his opera tions. The great height of the demigod — for h stood a fathom and half in his stocking feet — offered a preliminary obstacle to this attack. Bu here, in the first skirmish of the battle, intelle already began to triumph over matter. By mean of a pair of library steps, the injured householde gained a posture of advantage; and with grea

wipes of the coal-axe, proceeded to decapitate the rute.

Two hours later, what had been the erect image a gigantic coal-porter turned miraculously white, as now no more than a medley of disjected members: the quadragenarian torso prone against the edestal; the lascivious countenance leering down ne kitchen stair; the legs, the arms, the hands, nd even the fingers, scattered broadcast on the obby floor. Half an hour more, and all the débris ad been laboriously carted to the kitchen; and Morris, with a gentle sentiment of triumph, looked ound upon the scene of his achievements. Yes, e could deny all knowledge of it now: the lobby, eyond the fact that it was partly ruinous, betrayed o trace of the passage of Hercules. But it was weary Morris that crept up to bed; his arms and houlders ached, the palms of his hands burned rom the rough kisses of the coal-axe, and there as one smarting finger that stole continually to is mouth. Sleep long delayed to visit the dilapiated hero, and with the first peep of day it had gain deserted him.

The morning, as though to accord with his disas trous fortunes, dawned inclemently. An easterl gale was shouting in the streets; flaws of rai angrily assailed the windows; and as Morr dressed, the draught from the fireplace vividl played about his legs.

"I think," he could not help observing, bitterl "that with all I have to bear, they might hav given me decent weather."

There was no bread in the house, for Mis Hazeltine (like all women left to themselves) ha subsisted entirely upon cake. But some of th was found, and (along with what the poets ca a glass of fair, cold water) made up a semblan of a morning meal. And then down he sat u dauntedly to his delicate task.

Nothing can be more interesting than the stud of signatures, written (as they are) before mea and after, during indigestion and intoxicatio written when the signer is trembling for the li of his child, or has come from winning the Derb in his lawyer's office, or under the bright eyes his sweetheart. To the vulgar, these seem nev

æ same; but to the expert, the bank clerk, or the
hographer, they are constant quantities and as
cognisable as the North Star to the night-watch
deck.

To all this Morris was alive. In the theory of
at graceful art in which he was now embarking,
ır spirited leather merchant was beyond all re-
oach. But happily for the investor, forgery is
affair of practice. And as Morris sat surrounded
examples of his uncle's signature, and his own
competence, insidious depression stole upon his
irits. From time to time the wind wuthered
the chimney at his back; from time to time
ere swept over Bloomsbury a squall so dark that
must rise and light the gas; about him was the
ill and the mean disorder of a house out of com-
ission — the floor bare, the sofa heaped with
oks and accounts enveloped in a dirty table-
oth, the pens rusted, the paper glazed with a thick
m of dust; and yet these were but adminicles
misery, and the true root of his depression lay
und him on the table in the shape of misbegotten
rgeries.

"It 's one of the strangest things I ever hear of," he complained. "It almost seems as if was a talent that I did n't possess." He went on more minutely through his proofs. "A cler would simply gibe at them," said he. "Wel there 's nothing else but tracing possible."

He waited till a squall had passed and there can a blink of scowling daylight. Then he went to th window, and in the face of all John Street trace his uncle's signature. It was a poor thing at th best. "But it must do," said he, as he stoo gazing wofully on his handiwork. "He 's dea anyway." And he filled up the cheque for couple of a hundred and sallied forth for th Anglo-Patagonian Bank.

There, at the desk at which he was accustome to transact business, and with as much indifferen as he could assume, Morris presented the forge cheque to the big, red-bearded Scots teller. Th teller seemed to view it with surprise; and as h turned it this way and that, and even scrutinised th signature with a magnifying glass, his surpri appeared to warm into disfavour. Begging to

ccused for a moment, he passed away into the
armost quarters of the bank; whence, after an
ppreciable interval, he returned again in earnest
lk with a superior, an oldish and a baldish, but
very gentlemanly man.

"Mr. Morris Finsbury, I believe," said the
entlemanly man, fixing Morris with a pair of
ouble eye-glasses.

"That is my name," said Morris, quavering.
Is there anything wrong?"

"Well, the fact is, Mr. Finsbury, you see we are
ther surprised at receiving this," said the other,
cking at the cheque. "There are no effects."

"No effects?" cried Morris. "Why, I know
yself there must be eight and twenty hundred
ounds, if there 's a penny."

"Two seven six four, I think," replied the gen-
manly man; "but it was drawn yesterday."

"Drawn!" cried Morris.

"By your uncle himself, sir," continued the
her. "Not only that, but we discounted a bill
r him for — let me see — how much was it for,
r. Bell?"

"Eight hundred, Mr. Judkin," replied the telle

"Dent Pitman!" cried Morris, staggering bac

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Judkin.

"It 's — it 's only an expletive," said Morris.

"I hope there 's nothing wrong, Mr. Finsbury, said Mr. Bell.

"All I can tell you," said Morris, with a hars laugh, "is that the whole thing 's impossible. M uncle is at Bournemouth, unable to move."

"Really!" cried Mr. Bell, and he recovered th cheque from Mr. Judkin. "But this cheque dated in London, and to-day," he observed. "Ho d' ye account for that, sir?"

"Oh, that was a mistake," said Morris, an a deep tide of colour dyed his face and neck.

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Judkin, b he looked at his customer inquiringly.

"And — and —" resumed Morris, "even there were no effects — this is a very trifling su to overdraw — our firm — the name of Finsbu is surely good enough for such a wretched sum this."

"No doubt, Mr. Finsbury," returned M

dkin; "and if you insist I will take it into con-
leration; but I hardly think — in short, Mr.
nsbury, if there had been nothing else, the sig-
ture seems hardly all that we could wish."

"That 's of no consequence," replied Morris,
rvously. "I 'll get my uncle to sign another.
ne fact is," he went on, with a bold stroke, "my
ncle is so far from well at present that he was
nable to sign this cheque without assistance, and
fear that my holding the pen for him may have
ade the difference in the signature."

Mr. Judkin shot a keen glance into Morris's
ce: and then turned and looked at Mr. Bell.

"Well," he said, "it seems as if we have been
ctimised by a swindler. Pray tell Mr. Finsbury
e shall put detectives on at once. As for this
eque of yours, I regret that, owing to the way
was signed, the bank can hardly consider it —
nat shall I say? — business-like," and he re-
rned the cheque across the counter.

Morris took it up mechanically, he was think-
g of something very different.

"In a case of this kind," he began, "I believe

the loss falls on us; I mean upon my uncle a
myself."

"It does not, sir," replied Mr. Bell; "the ba
is responsible, and the bank will either recover t
money or refund it, you may depend on that."

Morris's face fell; then it was visited by anoth
gleam of hope.

"I 'll tell you what," he said, "you leave t
entirely in my hands. I 'll sift the matter. I
an idea, at any rate; and detectives," he add
appealingly, "are so expensive."

"The bank would not hear of it," returned M
Judkin. "The bank stands to lose between th
and four thousand pounds; it will spend as mu
more if necessary. An undiscovered forger is
permanent danger. We shall clear it up to t
bottom, Mr. Finsbury, set your mind at rest
that."

"Then I 'll stand the loss," said Morris, bold
"I order you to abandon the search." He w
determined that no inquiry should be made.

"I beg your pardon," returned Mr. Judk
"but we have nothing to do with you in t

ttter, which is one between your uncle and our-
wes. If he should take this opinion, and will
ner come here himself or will let me see him
his sick-room —— "

"Quite impossible," cried Morris.

"Well then, you see," said Mr. Judkin, "how
hands are tied. The whole affair must go at
ce into the hands of the police."

Morris mechanically folded the cheque and re-
red it to his pocket-book.

"Good-morning," said he, and scrambled some-
w out of the bank.

"I don't know what they suspect," he reflected,
can't make them out, their whole behaviour is
roughly unbusiness-like. But it does n't mat-
: all 's up with everything. The money has
en paid; the police are on the scent; in two
urs, that idiot Pitman will be nabbed — and
e whole story of the dead body in the evening
pers."

If he could have heard what passed in the bank
er his departure, he would have been less
rmed, perhaps more mortified.

"That was a curious affair, Mr. Bell," said M
Judkin.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Bell, "but I think we hav
given him a fright."

"Oh, we shall hear no more of Mr. Morris Fins
bury," returned the other; "it was a first attemp
and the house have dealt with us so long that I wa
anxious to deal gently. But I suppose, Mr. Bel
there can be no mistake about yesterday? It wa
old Mr. Finsbury himself?"

"There can be no possible doubt of that," sai
Mr. Bell, with a chuckle. "He explained to m
the principles of banking."

"Well, well," said Mr. Judkin. "The nex
time he calls, ask him to step into my room. I
is only proper he should be warned."

CHAPTER VII

N WHICH WILLIAM DENT PITMAN TAKES LEGAL ADVICE

NORFOLK STREET, King's Road — jocularly known among Mr. Pitman's lodgers as "Norfolk Island," is neither long, a handsome, nor a pleasing thoroughfare. irty, undersized maids-of-all-work issue from it pursuit of beer, or linger on its sidewalk listen- g to the voice of love. The cat's-meat man sses twice a day. An occasional organ-grinder anders in and wanders out again, disgusted. In liday time the street is the arena of the young oods of the neighbourhood, and the householders ve an opportunity of studying the manly art of f-defence. And yet Norfolk Street has one im to be respectable, for it contains not a gle shop — unless you count the public-house the corner, which is really in the King's Road.

The door of No. 7 bore a brass plate inscribe with the legend "W. D. Pitman, Artist." It wa not a particularly clean brass plate, nor was No. itself a particularly inviting place of residence And yet it had a character of its own, such as ma well quicken the pulse of the reader's curiosity For here was the home of an artist — and a dis tinguished artist too, highly distinguished by hi ill-success — which had never been made the sub ject of an article in the illustrated magazines. N wood-engraver had ever reproduced "a corner i the back drawing-room" or "the studio mantel piece" of No. 7; no young lady author had eve commented on "the unaffected simplicity" wit which Mr. Pitman received her in the midst o his "treasures." It is an omission I would gladl supply, but our business is only with the backwar parts and "abject rear" of this æsthetic dwelling.

Here was a garden, boasting a dwarf fountai (that never played) in the centre, a few grimy looking flowers in pots, two or three newly plante trees which the spring of Chelsea visited witho noticeable consequence, and two or three statue

er the antique, representing satyrs and nymphs the worst possible style of sculptured art. On e side, the garden was overshadowed by a pair crazy studios, usually hired out to the more scure and youthful practitioners of British art. pposite these another lofty out-building, some- nat more carefully finished, and boasting of a mmunication with the house and a private door the back lane, enshrined the multifarious in- stry of Mr. Pitman. All day, it is true, he was gaged in the work of education at a seminary r young ladies; but the evenings at least were s own, and these he would prolong far into the ght, now dashing off *A landscape with waterfall* oil, now a volunteer bust ("in marble," as he uld gently but proudly observe) of some public aracter, now stooping his chisel to a mere *mph* ("for a gas-bracket on a stair, sir"), or a e-size *Infant Samuel* for a religious nursery. r. Pitman had studied in Paris, and he had udied in Rome, supplied with funds by a fond rent who went subsequently bankrupt, in con- quence of a fall in corsets; and though he was

never thought to have the smallest modicum o talent, it was at one time supposed that he ha learned his business. Eighteen years of what i called "tuition" had relieved him of the dangerou knowledge. His artist lodgers would sometime reason with him; they would point out to hin how impossible it was to paint by gaslight, or t sculpture life-sized nymphs without a model.

"I know that," he would reply. "No one i Norfolk Street knows it better; and if I were ric I should certainly employ the best models in Lon don; but being poor, I have taught myself to d without them. An occasional model would onl disturb my ideal conception of the figure, and b a positive impediment in my career. As for paint ing by an artificial light," he would continue, "tha is simply a knack I have found it necessary to ac quire, my days being engrossed in the work o tuition."

At the moment when we must present him t our readers, Pitman was in his studio alone, b the dying light of the October day. He sa (sure enough with "unaffected simplicity") in

ndsor chair, his low-crowned black felt hat by side; a dark, weak, harmless, pathetic little man, d in the hue of mourning, his coat longer than usual with the laity, his neck enclosed in a collar thout a parting, his neckcloth pale in hue and nply tied; the whole outward man, except for pointed beard, tentatively clerical. There was hinning on the top of Pitman's head, there were ver hairs at Pitman's temple; poor gentleman, was no longer young; and years, and poverty, d humble ambition thwarted, make a cheerless .

In front of him, in the corner by the door, there od a portly barrel; and let him turn them where might, it was always to the barrel that his eyes d his thoughts returned.

"Should I open it? Should I return it? Should communicate with Mr. Semitopolis at once?" wondered. "No," he concluded finally, "noth- g without Mr. Finsbury's advice." And he ose and produced a shabby leathern desk. It ened without the formality of unlocking, and splayed the thick cream-coloured note paper on

which Mr. Pitman was in the habit of communi
cating with the proprietors of schools and th
parents of his pupils. He placed the desk on th
table by the window, and taking a saucer of India
ink from the chimney-piece, laboriously compose
the following letter:

"My dear Mr. Finsbury," it ran, "would it be presumin
on your kindness if I asked you to pay me a visit here th
evening? It is in no trifling matter that I invoke your val
able assistance, for need I say more than it concerns the we
fare of Mr. Semitopolis's statue of Hercules? I write yo
in great agitation of mind; for I have made all inquiries, an
greatly fear that this work of ancient art has been mislaid.
labour besides under another perplexity, not unconnected wi
the first. Pray excuse the inelegance of this scrawl, and b
lieve me yours in haste, William D. Pitman."

Armed with this he set forth and rang the be
of No. 233 King's Road, the private residence o
Michael Finsbury. He had met the lawyer
a time of great public excitement in Chelsea
Michael, who had a sense of humour and a gre
deal of careless kindness in his nature, followed th
acquaintance up, and having come to laugh, re
mained to drop into a contemptuous kind of frien

p. By this time, which was four years after first meeting, Pitman was the lawyer's dog.

"No," said the elderly housekeeper who opened door in person, "Mr. Michael 's not in yet. t ye 're looking terrible poorly, Mr. Pitman. ke a glass of sherry, sir, to cheer ye up."

"No, I thank you, ma'am," replied the artist. t is very good in you, but I scarcely feel in ficient spirits for sherry. Just give Mr. Fins- y this note, and ask him to look round — to the or in the lane, you will please tell him; I shall in the studio all evening."

And he turned again into the street and walked wly homeward. A hair-dresser's window caught attention, and he stared long and earnestly the proud, high-born, waxen lady in evening ess, who circulated in the centre of the show. e artist woke in him, in spite of his troubles.

"It is all very well to run down the men who ke these things," he cried, "but there 's a some- ng — there 's a haughty, indefinable something ut that figure. It 's what I tried for in my *press Eugénie*," he added, with a sigh.

And he went home reflecting on the quality "They don't teach you that direct appeal in Paris, he thought. "It 's British. Come, I am going t sleep, I must wake up, I must aim higher — ai higher," cried the little artist to himself. A through his tea and afterward, as he was giving h eldest boy a lesson on the fiddle, his mind dwe no longer on his troubles, but he was wrapt int the better land; and no sooner was he at libert than he hastened with positive exhilaration to h studio.

Not even the sight of the barrel could entire cast him down. He flung himself with rising ze into his work — a bust of Mr. Gladstone from photograph; turned (with extraordinary succes the difficulty of the back of the head, for which had no documents beyond a hazy recollection a public meeting; delighted himself by his trea ment of the collar; and was only recalled to t cares of life by Michael Finsbury's rattle at t door.

"Well, what 's wrong?" said Michael, advan ing to the grate where, knowing his friend

light in a bright fire, Mr. Pitman had not ared the fuel. "I suppose you have come to ief somehow."

"There is no expression strong enough," said e artist. "Mr. Semitopolis's statue has not rned up, and I am afraid I shall be answerable or the money; but I think nothing of that — hat I fear, my dear Mr. Finsbury, what I fear – alas, that I should have to say it! — is exposure. he Hercules was to be smuggled out of Italy; thing positively wrong, a thing in which a man f my principles and in my responsible position ould have taken (as I now see too late) no part hatever."

"This sounds like very serious work," said the wyer. "It will require a great deal of drink, itman."

"I took the liberty of — in short, of being pre-ared for you," replied the artist, pointing to a ettle, a bottle of gin, a lemon, and glasses.

Michael mixed himself a grog, and offered the tist a cigar.

"No, thank you," said Pitman. "I used occa-

sionally to be rather partial to it, but the smell is s disagreeable about the clothes."

"All right," said the lawyer. "I am comfort able now. Unfold your tale."

At some length, Pitman set forth his sorrows He had gone to-day to Waterloo, expecting t receive the colossal Hercules, and he had receive instead a barrel not big enough to hold Disco bolus; yet the barrel was addressed in the han (with which he was perfectly acquainted) of hi Roman correspondent. What was stranger stil a case had arrived by the same train, large enoug and heavy enough to contain the Hercules; an this case had been taken to an address no undiscoverable. "The van-man (I regret t say it) had been drinking, and his languag was such as I could never bring myself to re peat. He was at once discharged by the super intendent of the line, who behaved most properl throughout and is to make inquiries at Southamp ton. In the meanwhile, what was I to do? left my address and brought the barrel home but remembering an old adage, I determine

t to open it except in the presence of my
vyer."

"Is that all?" asked Michael. "I don't see
y cause to worry. The Hercules has stuck upon
e road. It will drop in to-morrow or the day
ter; and as for the barrel, depend upon it, it 's
testimonial from one of your young ladies, and
obably contains oysters."

"Oh, don't speak so loud!" cried the little art-
. "It would cost me my place if I were heard
speak lightly of the young ladies, and besides,
ny oysters from Italy? and why should they
me to me addressed in Signor Ricardi's hand?"

"Well, let 's have a look at it," said Michael.
Let 's roll it forward to the light."

The two men rolled the barrel from the corner,
d stood it on end before the fire.

"It 's heavy enough to be oysters," remarked
ichael, judiciously.

"Shall we open it at once?" inquired the artist,
no had grown decidedly cheerful under the com-
ned effects of company and gin; and without
iting for a reply, he began to strip as if

for a prize-fight, tossed his clerical collar in th waste-paper basket, hung his clerical coat upo a nail, and with a chisel in one hand and hammer in the other, struck the first blow of th evening.

"That 's the style, William Dent!" cri Michael. "There 's fire for your money! It ma be a romantic visit from one of the young ladi — a sort of Cleopatra business. Have a care, an don't stave in Cleopatra's head."

But the sight of Pitman's alacrity was infe tious. The lawyer could sit still no longe Tossing his cigar into the fire, he snatched th instrument from the unwilling hands of the arti and fell to himself. Soon the sweat stood in bea upon his large, fair brow; his stylish trousers we defaced with iron rust, and the state of his chi testified to misdirected energies.

A cask is not an easy thing to open, even wh you set about it in the right way; when you s about it wrongly, the whole structure must be r solved into its elements. Such was the cour pursued alike by the artist and the lawyer. Pr

tly the last hoop had been removed — a couple smart blows tumbled the staves upon the ground and what had once been a barrel was no more an a confused heap of broken and distorted ards.

In the midst of these, a certain dismal some- ing, swathed in blankets, remained for an in- ant upright, and then toppled to one side and avily collapsed before the fire. Even as the ing subsided, an eye-glass tingled to the floor d rolled toward the screaming Pitman.

"Hold your tongue!" said Michael. He dashed the house door and locked it; then, with a pale ce and bitten lip, he drew near, pulled aside a rner of the swathing blanket, and recoiled, uddering.

There was a long silence in the studio.

"Now tell me," said Michael, in a low voice: Had you any hand in it?" and he pointed to the dy.

The little artist could only utter broken and dis- inted sounds.

Michael poured some gin into a glass. "Drink

that," he said. "Don't be afraid of me. I'm your friend through thick and thin."

Pitman put the liquor down untasted.

"I swear before God," he said, "this is another mystery to me. In my worst fears, I never dreamed of such a thing. I would not lay a finger on a sucking infant."

"That's all square," said Michael, with a sigh of huge relief. "I believe you, old boy." And he shook the artist warmly by the hand. "I thought for a moment," he added, with rather a ghastly smile, "I thought for a moment you might have made way with Mr. Semitopolis."

"It would make no difference if I had," groaned Pitman. "All is at an end for me. There's the writing on the wall."

"To begin with," said Michael, "let's get him out of sight; for to be quite plain with you, Pitman, I don't like your friend's appearance." And with that the lawyer shuddered. "Where can we put it?"

"You might put it in the closet there — if you could bear to touch it," answered the artist.

"Somebody has to do it, Pitman," returned the wyer; "and it seems as if it had to be me. You over to the table, turn your back, and mix me grog; that 's a fair division of labour."

About ninety seconds later, the closet door was ard to shut.

"There," observed Michael, "that 's more home- e. You can turn now, my pallid Pitman. Is is the grog?" he ran on. "Heaven forgive you, 's a lemonade!"

"But oh, Finsbury, what are we to do with it?" ailed the artist, laying a clutching hand upon the wyer's arm.

"Do with it?" repeated Michael. "Bury it in e of your flower-beds, and erect one of your n statues for a monument. I tell you we should k devilish romantic shovelling out the sod by e moon's pale ray. Here, put some gin in this."

"I beg of you, Mr. Finsbury, do not trifle with y misery," cried Pitman. "You see before you man who has been all his life — I do not hesi- e to say it — eminently respectable. Even in is solemn hour I can lay my hand upon my

heart without a blush. Except on the really tri
fling point of the smuggling of the Hercules (and
even of that I now humbly repent), my life has
been entirely fit for publication. I never feared
the light," cried the little man; "and now —
now ——!"

"Cheer up, old boy," said Michael. "I assure
you we should count this little contretemps a trifle
at the office; it 's the sort of thing that may occur
to any one; and if you 're perfectly sure you had
no hand in it ——"

"What language am I to find ——" began
Pitman.

"Oh, I 'll do that part of it," interrupted
Michael, "you have no experience. But the point
is this: If — or rather since — you know nothing
of the crime, since the — the party in the closet —
is neither your father, nor your brother, nor your
creditor, nor your mother-in-law, nor what they
call an injured husband ——"

"Oh, my dear sir!" interjected Pitman, horrified.

"Since, in short," continued the lawyer, "you
had no possible interest in the crime, we have

ffectly free field before us and a safe game to
y. Indeed the problem is really entertaining;
s one I have long contemplated in the light of
A. B. case; here it is at last under my hand
specie; and I mean to pull you through. Do
hear that? — I mean to pull you through.
me see: it 's a long time since I have had
at I call a genuine holiday; I 'll send an ex-
e to-morrow to the office. We had best be
ly," he added, significantly; " for we must not
il the market for the other man."

' What do you mean? " inquired Pitman.
What other man? The inspector of police? "

' Damn the inspector of police! " remarked his
npanion. " If you won't take the short cut and
y this in your back garden, we must find some
who will bury it in his. We must place the
air, in short, in the hands of some one of fewer
uples and more resources."

' A private detective, perhaps? " suggested
man.

' There are times when you fill me with pity,"
erved the lawyer. " By the way, Pitman," he

added, in another key, "I have always regrette that you have no piano in this den of yours. Eve if you don't play yourself, your friends might lik to entertain themselves with a little music whil you were mudding."

"I shall get one at once if you like," said Pi man, nervously, anxious to please. "I play th fiddle a little as it is."

"I know you do," said Michael; "but what the fiddle — above all as you play it? What yo want is polyphonic music. And I 'll tell you wha it is, since it 's too late for you to buy a pian I 'll give you mine."

"Thank you," said the artist, blankly. "Yo will give me yours? I am sure it 's very good i you."

"Yes, I 'll give you mine," continued Michae "for the inspector of police to play on while h men are digging up your back garden."

Pitman stared at him in pained amazement.

"No, I 'm not insane," Michael went on. "I ' playful but quite coherent. See here, Pitman follow me one half minute. I mean to profit b

refreshing fact that we are really and truly
ocent; nothing but the presence of the — you
w what — connects us with the crime; once
us get rid of it, no matter how, and there is no
sible clue to trace us by. Well, I give you
piano; we 'll bring it round this very night.
-morrow, we rip the fittings out, deposit the
our friend — inside, plump the whole on a cart,
l carry it to the chambers of a young gentle-
n whom I know by sight."

'Whom you know by sight?" repeated Pitman.

'And what is more to the purpose," continued
chael, "whose chambers I know better than he
s himself. A friend of mine — I call him
friend for brevity; he is now, I understand,
Demarara and (most likely) in jail — was
previous occupant. I defended him, and
ot him off too — all saved but honour; his
ets were nil, but he gave me what he had,
r gentleman, and along with the rest —
key of his chambers. It 's there that I
pose to leave the piano and shall we say,
opatra?"

"It seems very wild," said Pitman. "An what will become of the poor young gentlema whom you know by sight?"

"It will do him good," said Michael, cheerily "Just what he wants to steady him."

"But, my dear sir, he might be involved in charge of — a charge of murder," gulped th artist.

"Well, he 'll be just where we are," returne the lawyer. "He 's innocent, you see. Wha hangs people, my dear Pitman, is the unfortunat circumstance of guilt."

"But indeed, indeed," pleaded Pitman, "th whole scheme appears to me so wild. Would not be safer, after all, just to send for the police?

"And make a scandal?" inquired Michae "'The Chelsea Mystery; alleged innocence Pitman'? How would that do at the Seminary?

"It would imply my discharge," admitted th drawing-master. "I cannot deny that."

"And besides," said Michael, "I am not goin to embark in such a business and have no fun f my money."

"Oh, my dear sir, is that a proper spirit?" ed Pitman.

"Oh, I only said that to cheer you up," said unabashed Michael. "Nothing like a little icious levity. But it 's quite needless to dis- s. If you mean to follow my advice, come on, l let us get the piano at once. If you don't, t drop me the word, and I 'll leave you to deal h the whole thing according to your better gment."

"You know perfectly well that I depend on l entirely," returned Pitman. "But oh, what night is before me with that — horror in my dio! How am I to think of it on my pillow?"

"Well, you know, my piano will be there too," l Michael. "That 'll raise the average."

An hour later a cart came up the lane, and the yer's piano — a momentous Broadwood grand was deposited in Mr. Pitman's studio.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH MICHAEL FINSBURY ENJOYS A HOLIDAY

PUNCTUALLY at eight o'clock next morn ing the lawyer rattled (according to pre vious appointment) on the studio doo He found the artist sadly altered for the wors — bleached, bloodshot, and chalky — a man upo wires, the tail of his haggard eye still wanderin to the closet. Nor was the professor of drawin less inclined to wonder at his friend. Michael wa usually attired in the height of fashion, with certain mercantile brilliancy best described perha as stylish; nor could anything be said against hi as a rule, but that he looked a trifle too like wedding guest to be quite a gentleman. To-da he had fallen altogether from these heights. H wore a flannel shirt of washed-out shepherd's ta tan, and a suit of reddish tweeds, of the colo

own to tailors as "heather mixture"; his neck-th was black, and tied loosely in a sailor's knot; rusty ulster partly concealed these advantages; d his feet were shod with rough walking-boots. is hat was an old soft felt, which he removed th a flourish as he entered.

"Here I am, William Dent!" he cried, and awing from his pocket two little wisps of red-sh hair, he held them to his cheeks like side-iskers and danced about the studio with the my graces of a ballet-girl.

Pitman laughed sadly. "I should never have own you," said he.

"Nor were you intended to," returned Michael, placing his false whiskers in his pocket. "Now e must overhaul you and your wardrobe, and dis-ise you up to the nines."

"Disguise!" cried the artist. "Must I indeed sguise myself? Has it come to that?"

"My dear creature," returned his companion, disguise is the spice of life. What is life, pas-onately exclaimed the French philosopher, with-t the pleasures of disguise? I don't say it 's

always good taste, and I know it 's unprofessiona but what 's the odds, down-hearted drawing master? It has to be. We have to leave a fal impression on the minds of many persons, and particular on the mind of Mr. Gideon Forsyth - the young gentleman I know by sight — if should have the bad taste to be at home."

"If he be at home?" faltered the artist. "Th would be the end of all."

"Won't matter a d——," returned Micha airily. "Let me see your clothes, and I 'll ma a new man of you in a jiffy."

In the bedroom, to which he was at once co ducted, Michael examined Pitman's poor and scan wardrobe with a humourous eye, picked out a sho jacket of black alpaca, and presently added to th a pair of summer trousers which somehow to his fancy as incongruous. Then, with the ga ments in his hand, he scrutinised the artist close

"I don't like that clerical collar," he remarke "Have you nothing else?"

The professor of drawing pondered for a m ment, and then brightened; "I have a pair

w-necked shirts," he said, "that I used to wear Paris as a student. They are rather loud."

"The very thing!" ejaculated Michael. "You ok perfectly beastly. Here are spats, too," he ntinued, drawing forth a pair of those offen-ve little gaiters. "Must have spats! And now ou jump into these, and whistle a tune at the indow for (say) three-quarters of an hour. fter that you can rejoin me on the field of ory."

So saying Michael returned to the studio. It as the morning of the easterly gale; the wind ew shrilly among the statues in the garden, and rove the rain upon the skylight in the studio iling; and at about the same moment of time hen Morris attacked the hundredth version of s uncle's signature in Bloomsbury, Michael, in helsea, began to rip the wires out of the Broad-ood grand.

Three-quarters of an hour later Pitman was lmitted to find the closet-door standing open, e closet untenanted, and the piano discreetly ut.

"It 's a remarkably heavy instrument," observe Michael, and turned to consider his friend's dis guise. "You must shave off that beard of yours, he said.

"My beard!" cried Pitman. "I cannot shav my beard. I cannot tamper with my appearanc — my principals would object. They hold ver strong views as to the appearance of the profes sors — young ladies are considered so romanti My beard was regarded as quite a feature whe I went about the place. It was regarded," sai the artist, with rising colour, "it was regarded a unbecoming."

"You can let it grow again," returned Michae "and then you 'll be so precious ugly that they ' raise your salary."

"But I don't want to look ugly," cried th artist.

"Don't be an ass," said Michael, who hate beards and was delighted to destroy one. "O with it like a man!"

"Of course, if you insist," said Pitman; an then he sighed, fetched some hot water from th

cchen, and setting a glass upon his easel, first pped his beard with scissors and then shaved s chin. He could not conceal from himself, as regarded the result, that his last claims to man-od had been sacrificed, but Michael seemed lighted.

"A new man, I declare!" he cried. "When give you the window-glass spectacles I have in y pocket, you 'll be the beau ideal of a French mmercial traveller."

Pitman did not reply, but continued to gaze sconsolately on his image in the glass.

"Do you know," asked Michael, "what the overnor of South Carolina said to the Governor North Carolina? 'It 's a long time between inks,' observed that powerful thinker; and if ou will put your hand into the top left-hand cket of my ulster, I have an impression you will d a flask of brandy. Thank you, Pitman," he ded, as he filled out a glass for each. "Now u will give me news of this."

The artist reached out his hand for the water-g, but Michael arrested the movement.

"Not if you went upon your knees!" he cried "This is the finest liqueur brandy in Great Britain."

Pitman put his lips to it, set it down again, and sighed.

"Well, I must say you're the poorest compan ion for a holiday!" cried Michael. "If that's a you know of brandy, you shall have no more of it and while I finish the flask, you may as well begi business. Come to think of it," he broke off, "I have made an abominable error: you should hav ordered the cart before you were disguised. Why Pitman, what the devil's the use of you? wh could n't you have reminded me of that?"

"I never even knew there was a cart to b ordered," said the artist. "But I can take off th disguise again," he suggested eagerly.

"You would find it rather a bother to put o your beard," observed the lawyer. "No, it's false step; the sort of thing that hangs people, he continued, with eminent cheerfulness, as h sipped his brandy; "and it can't be retraced nov Off to the mews with you, make all the arrang ments; they're to take the piano from here, ca

to Victoria, and despatch it thence by rail to annon Street, to lie till called for in the name Fortuné du Boisgobey."

"Is n't that rather an awkward name?" pleaded itman.

"Awkward?" cried Michael, scornfully. "It ould hang us both! Brown is both safer and asier to pronounce. Call it Brown."

"I wish," said Pitman, "for my sake, I wish ou would n't talk so much of hanging."

"Talking about it 's nothing, my boy!" re-urned Michael. "But take your hat and be off, nd mind and pay everything beforehand."

Left to himself, the lawyer turned his attention or some time exclusively to the liqueur brandy, nd his spirits, which had been pretty fair all norning, now prodigiously rose. He proceeded to djust his whiskers finally before the glass. "Dev-ish rich," he remarked, as he contemplated his eflection; "I look like a purser's mate." And t that moment, the window-glass spectacles (which e had hitherto destined for Pitman) flashed into is mind; he put them on, and fell in love with the

effect. "Just what I required," he said. "I won
der what I look like now? A humourous novelist
I should think," and he began to practise diver
characters of walk, naming them to himself as h
proceeded. "Walk of a humourous novelist — bu
that would require an umbrella. Walk of a pur
ser's mate. Walk of an Australian colonist re
visiting the scenes of childhood. Walk of Sepo
colonel, ditto, ditto." And in the midst of th
Sepoy colonel (which was an excellent assumption
although inconsistent with the style of his make
up), his eye lighted on the piano. This instru
ment was made to lock both at the top and at th
keyboard, but the key of the latter had been mis
laid. Michael opened it and ran his fingers ove
the dumb keys. "Fine instrument — full, ric
tone," he observed, and he drew in a seat.

When Mr. Pitman returned to the studio, h
was appalled to observe his guide, philosophe
and friend performing miracles of execution o
the silent grand.

"Heaven help me!" thought the little man, "
fear he has been drinking! Mr. Finsbury," h

d aloud; and Michael, without rising, turned n him a countenance somewhat flushed, encir- d with the bush of the red whiskers, and be- idden by the spectacles. "Capriccio in B-flat the departure of a friend," said he, continuing noiseless evolutions.

Indignation awoke in the mind of Pitman. Those spectacles were to be mine," he cried. They are an essential part of my disguise."

"I am going to wear them myself," replied ichael; and he added, with some show of truth, there would be a devil of a lot of suspicion oused if we both wore spectacles."

"Oh, well," said the assenting Pitman, "I ther counted on them; but of course, if you sist! And at any rate, here is the cart at the or."

While the men were at work, Michael concealed mself in the closet among the débris of the barrel d the wires of the piano; and as soon as the ast was clear, the pair sallied forth by the lane, mped into a hansom in the King's Road, and ere driven rapidly toward town. It was still

cold and raw and boisterous; the rain beat strongly in their faces, but Michael refused to have the glass let down; he had now suddenly donned the character of cicerone, and pointed out and lucidly commented on the sights of London, as they drove.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you don't seem to know anything of your native city. Suppose we visited the Tower? No? Well, perhaps it's a trifle out of our way. But anyway —— Here, Cabby, drive round by Trafalgar Square!" And on that historic battle-field he insisted on drawing up, while he criticised the statues and gave the artist many curious details (quite new to history) of the lives of the celebrated men they represented.

It would be difficult to express what Pitman suffered in the cab: cold, wet, terror in the capital degree, a grounded distrust of the commander under whom he served, a sense of impudency in the matter of the low-necked shirt, a bitter sense of the decline and fall involved in the deprivation of his beard, all these were among the ingredients of the bowl. To reach the restaurant, for which

gy were deviously steering, was the first relief. hear Michael bespeak a private room was a ond and a still greater. Nor, as they mounted stair under the guidance of an unintelligible n, did he fail to note with gratitude the few- s of the persons present, or the still more cheer- g fact that the greater part of these were exiles m the land of France. It was thus a blessed ught that none of them would be connected th the Seminary; for even the French professor, ugh admittedly a papist, he could scarce imagine quenting so rakish an establishment.

The alien introduced them into a small, bare m with a single table, a sofa, and a dwarfish ; and Michael called promptly for more coals d a couple of brandies and sodas.

"Oh, no," said Pitman, "surely not — no more drink."

"I don't know what you would be at," said chael, plaintively. "It 's positively necessary do something; and one should n't smoke before als — I thought that was understood. You m to have no idea of hygiene." And he

compared his watch with the clock upon the chimney-piece.

Pitman fell into bitter musing; here he was ridiculously shorn, absurdly disguised, in the company of a drunken man in spectacles, and waiting for a champagne luncheon in a restaurant painfully foreign. What would his principals think if they could see him? What, if they knew his tragic and deceitful errand?

From these reflections he was aroused by the entrance of the alien with the brandies and sodas. Michael took one and bade the waiter pass the other to his friend.

Pitman waved it from him with his hand. "Don't let me lose all self-respect," he said.

"Anything to oblige a friend," returned Michael. "But I 'm not going to drink alone. Here," he added to the waiter, "you take it." And then touching glasses, "The health of Mr. Gideon Forsyth," said he.

"Meestare Gidden Borsye," replied the waiter, and he tossed off the liquor in four gulps.

"Have another?" said Michael, with undis-

ed interest. "I never saw a man drink faster. estores one's confidence in the human race." ut the waiter excused himself politely, and sted by some one from without, began to bring unch.

Michael made an excellent meal, which he washed n with a bottle of Heidsieck's dry monopole. for the artist, he was far too uneasy to eat, his companion flatly refused to let him share he champagne unless he did.

One of us must stay sober," remarked the yer, "and I won't give you champagne on the ngth of a leg of grouse. I have to be cautious," added, confidentially. "One drunken man, ellent business — two drunken men, all my "

n the production of coffee and departure of waiter, Michael might have been observed to e portentous efforts after gravity of mien. He ed his friend in the face (one eye perhaps a e off), and addressed him thickly but severely.

Enough of this fooling," was his not inappro-te exordium. "To business. Mark me closely.

I am an Australian. My name is John Dickso
though you might n't think it from my unassumi
appearance. You will be relieved to hear that
am rich, sir, very rich. You can't go into th
sort of thing too thoroughly, Pitman; the whc
secret is preparation, and I get up my biograp
from the beginning, and I could tell it you no
only I have forgotten it."

"Perhaps I 'm stupid ——" began Pitman.

"That 's it!" cried Michael. "Very stupi
but rich too — richer than I am. I thought y
would enjoy it, Pitman, so I 've arranged that y
were to be literally wallowing in wealth. B
then, on the other hand, you 're only an Americ
and a maker of india-rubber overshoes at th
And the worst of it is — why should I conceal
from you? — the worst of it is that you 're cal
Ezra Thomas. Now," said Michael, with a rea
appalling seriousness of manner, "tell me who
are."

The unfortunate little man was cross-examin
till he knew these facts by heart.

"There!" cried the lawyer. "Our plans

id. Thoroughly consistent — that 's the great ing."

"But I don't understand," objected Pitman.

"Oh, you 'll understand right enough when it mes to the point," said Michael, rising.

"There does n't seem any story to it," said the tist.

"We can invent one as we go along," returned e lawyer.

"But I can't invent," protested Pitman. "I ever could invent in all my life."

"You 'll find you have to, my boy," was Iichael's easy comment, and he began calling or the waiter, with whom he at once resumed sparkling conversation.

It was a downcast little man that followed him. Of course he is very clever, but can I trust him such a state?" he asked himself. And when ey were once more in a hansom, he took heart f grace.

"Don't you think," he faltered, "it would be iser, considering all things, to put this business f?"

"Put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day?" cried Michael, with indignation. "Never heard of such a thing! Cheer up, it's all right, go in and win — there's a lion-hearted Pitman!"

At Cannon Street, they inquired for Mr. Brown's piano, which had duly arrived, drove thence to a neighbouring mews, where they contracted for a cart, and while that was being got ready, took shelter in the harness-room beside the stove. Here the lawyer presently toppled against the wall and fell into a gentle slumber; so that Pitman found himself launched on his own resources in the midst of several staring loafers, such as love to spend unprofitable days about a stable.

"Rough day, sir," observed one. "Do you go far?"

"Yes, it's a — rather a rough day," said the artist; and then, feeling that he must change the conversation, "my friend is an Australian, he is very impulsive," he added.

"An Australian?" said another. "I've a brother myself in Melbourne. Does your friend come from that way at all?"

"No, not exactly," replied the artist, whose eas of the geography of New Holland were a ttle scattered. "He lives immensely far inland, nd is very rich."

The loafers gazed with great respect upon the umbering colonist.

"Well," remarked the second speaker, "it 's a ighty big place, is Australia. Do you come from here away too?"

"No, I do not," said Pitman. "I do not, and don't want to," he added, irritably. And then eeling some diversion needful, he fell upon Michael nd shook him up.

"Hullo," said the lawyer, "what 's wrong?"

"The cart is nearly ready," said Pitman, sternly. I will not allow you to sleep."

"All right — no offence, old man," replied Iichael, yawning. "A little sleep never did anyody any harm; I feel comparatively sober now. ut what 's all the hurry?" he added, looking ound him glassily. "I don't see the cart, and 've forgotten where we left the piano."

What more the lawyer might have said, in

the confidence of the moment, is with Pitman a matter of tremulous conjecture to this day; but by the most blessed circumstance, the cart was then announced, and Michael must bend the forces of his mind to the more difficult task of rising.

"Of course, you'll drive," he remarked to his companion, as he clambered on the vehicle.

"I drive!" cried Pitman. "I never did such a thing in my life. I cannot drive."

"Very well," responded Michael, with entire composure, "neither can I see. But just as you like. Anything to oblige a friend."

A glimpse of the ostler's darkening countenance decided Pitman. "All right," he said, desperately, "you drive. I'll tell you where to go."

On Michael in the character of charioteer (since this is not intended to be a novel of adventure) it would be superfluous to dwell at length. Pitman, as he sat holding on and gasping counsels, sole witness of this singular feat, knew not whether most to admire the driver's valour or his undeserved good-fortune. But the latter at least

ailed, the cart reached Cannon Street without
ster; and Mr. Brown's piano was speedily and
erly got on board.

Well, sir," said the leading porter, smiling as
nentally reckoned up a handful of loose silver,
at 's a mortal heavy piano."

It 's the richness of the tone," returned Michael,
e drove away.

t was but a little distance in the rain, which
v fell thick and quiet, to the neighbourhood of
. Gideon Forsyth's chambers in the Temple.
ere, in a deserted by-street, Michael drew up
horses and gave them in charge to a blighted
e-black; and the pair descending from the cart,
ereon they had figured so incongruously, set
h on foot for the decisive scene of their ad-
ture. For the first time, Michael displayed a
dow of uneasiness.

Are my whiskers right?" he asked. "It
ld be the devil and all if I was spotted."

They are perfectly in their place," returned
nan, with scant attention. "But is my dis-
se equally effective? There is nothing more

likely than that I should meet some of m patrons."

"Oh, nobody could tell you without your beard said Michael. "All you have to do is to rememb to speak slow; you speak through your no already."

"I only hope the young man won't be at home sighed Pitman.

"And I only hope he'll be alone," returne the lawyer. "It will save a precious sight manœuvring."

And sure enough, when they had knocked at th door, Gideon admitted them in person to a roor warmed by a moderate fire, framed nearly to th roof in works connected with the bench of Briti Themis, and offering, except in one particula eloquent testimony to the legal zeal of the pr prietor. The one particular was the chimne piece, which displayed a varied assortment of pip tobacco, cigar-boxes, and yellow-backed Fren novels.

"Mr. Forsyth, I believe?" It was Michael wh thus opened the engagement. "We have come

ouble you with a piece of business. I fear it 's arcely professional ——"

"I am afraid I ought to be instructed through solicitor," replied Gideon.

"Well, well, you shall name your own, and the hole affair can be put on a more regular footing -morrow," replied Michael, taking a chair and notioning Pitman to do the same. "But you see e did n't know any solicitors; we did happen to now of you, and time presses."

"May I inquire, gentlemen," asked Gideon, "to hom it was I am indebted for a recommen- ation?"

"You may inquire," returned the lawyer, with foolish laugh; "but I was invited not to tell you - till the thing was done."

"My uncle, no doubt," was the barrister's onclusion.

"My name is John Dickson," continued Michael; a pretty well-known name in Ballarat; and my iend here is Mr. Ezra Thomas, of the United tates of America, a wealthy manufacturer of dia-rubber overshoes."

"Stop one moment till I make a note of that," said Gideon; any one might have supposed he was an old practitioner.

"Perhaps you would n't mind my smoking a cigar?" asked Michael. He had pulled himself together for the entrance; now again there began to settle on his mind clouds of irresponsible humour and incipient slumber; and he hoped (as so many have hoped in the like case) that a cigar would clear him.

"Oh, certainly," cried Gideon, blandly. "Try one of mine; I can confidently recommend them." And he handed the box to his client.

"In case I don't make myself perfectly clear," observed the Australian, "it 's perhaps best to tell you candidly that I 've been lunching. It 's a thing that may happen to any one."

"Oh, certainly," replied the affable barrister. "But please be under no sense of hurry. I can give you," he added, thoughtfully consulting his watch — "yes, I can give you the whole afternoon."

"The business that brings me here," resumed the Australian with gusto, "is devilish delicate.

tell you. My friend Mr. Thomas, being an erican of Portuguese extraction, unacquainted our habits, and a wealthy manufacturer of adwood pianos ——"

Broadwood pianos?" cried Gideon, with some prise. "Dear me, do I understand Mr. Thomas e a member of the firm?"

Oh, pirated Broadwoods," returned Michael. y friend 's the American Broadwood."

But I understood you to say," objected Gideon, certainly have it so in my notes — that your nd was a manufacturer of india-rubber over-es."

I know it 's confusing at first," said the Aus-ian, with a beaming smile. "But he — in rt, he combines the two professions. And many ers besides — many, many, many others," re-ted Mr. Dickson, with drunken solemnity. r. Thomas' cotton-mills are one of the sights Tallahassee; Mr. Thomas' tobacco-mills are pride of Richmond, Va.; in short, he 's one ny oldest friends, Mr. Forsyth, and I lay his before you with emotion."

The barrister looked at Mr. Thomas and wa agreeably prepossessed by his open although ne vous countenance, and the simplicity and timidi of his manner. "What a people are these Amer cans!" he thought. "Look at this nervous, weed simple little bird in a low-necked shirt, and thi of him wielding and directing interests so extend and seemingly incongruous! But had we n better," he observed aloud, "had we not perha better approach the facts?"

"Man of business, I perceive, sir!" said t Australian. "Let 's approach the facts. It 's breach of promise case."

The unhappy artist was so unprepared for th view of his position that he could scarce suppre a cry.

"Dear me," said Gideon, "they are apt to very troublesome. Tell me everything about it he added, kindly; "if you require my assistan conceal nothing."

"*You* tell him," said Michael, feeling, appa ently, that he had done his share. "My frie will tell you all about it," he added to Gide

n a yawn. "Excuse my closing my eyes a
ment; I 've been sitting up with a sick friend."
Pitman gazed blankly about the room; rage and
pair seethed in his innocent spirit; thoughts of
ht, thoughts even of suicide, came and went
ore him; and still the barrister patiently waited,
l still the artist groped in vain for any form of
rds, however insignificant.

'It 's a breach of promise case," he said at last,
a low voice. "I — I am threatened with a
ach of promise case." Here, in desperate quest
inspiration, he made a clutch at his beard; his
gers closed upon the unfamiliar smoothness of
haven chin; and with that, hope and courage
such expressions could ever have been appro-
ate in the case of Pitman) conjointly fled. He
ok Michael roughly. "Wake up!" he cried,
h genuine irritation in his tones. "I cannot
it, and you know I can't."

'You must excuse my friend," said Michael;
e 's no hand as a narrator of stirring incident.
e case is simple," he went on. "My friend is
an of very strong passions, and accustomed to

a simple, patriarchal style of life. You see th thing from here: unfortunate visit to Europe followed by unfortunate acquaintance with shan foreign count, who has a lovely daughter. Mr Thomas was quite carried away; he proposed, h was accepted, and he wrote — wrote in a styl which I am sure he must regret to-day. If thes letters are produced in court, sir, Mr. Thomas character is gone."

"Am I to understand ——" began Gideon.

"My dear sir," said the Australian, emphati cally, "it is n't possible to understand unless yo saw them."

"That is a painful circumstance," said Gid eon; he glanced pityingly in the direction o the culprit, and observing on his countenanc every mark of confusion, pityingly withdrew hi eyes.

"And that would be nothing," continued Mr Dickson, sternly, "but I wish — I wish from m heart, sir, I could say that Mr. Thomas' hand were clean. He has no excuse; for he was en gaged at the time — and is still engaged — to th

elle of Constantinople, Ga. My friend's conduct vas unworthy of the brutes that perish."

"Ga?" repeated Gideon, inquiringly.

"A contraction in current use," said Michael. Ga for Georgia, in the same way as Co for Company."

"I was aware it was sometimes so written," eturned the barrister, "but not that it was so pronounced."

"Fact, I assure you," said Michael. "You now ee for yourself, sir, that if this unhappy person s to be saved, some devilish sharp practice will be eeded. There 's money, and no desire to spare it. Mr. Thomas could write a cheque to-morrow for hundred thousand. And, Mr. Forsyth, there 's etter than money. The foreign count — Count Tarnow, he calls himself — was formerly a tobacconist in Bayswater, and passed under the humble ut expressive name of Schmidt; his daughter — f she is his daughter — there 's another point — nake a note of that, Mr. Forsyth — his daughter t that time actually served in the shop — and he now proposes to marry a man of the eminence

of Mr. Thomas! Now do you see our game? We know they contemplate a move; and we wish to forestall 'em. Down you go to Hampton Court, where they live, and threaten, or bribe, or both, until you get the letters; if you can't, God help us, we must go to court and Thomas must be exposed. I 'll be done with him for one," added the unchivalrous friend.

"There seem some elements of success," said Gideon. "Was Schmidt at all known to the police?"

"We hope so," said Michael. "We have every ground to think so. Mark the neighbourhood — Bayswater! does n't Bayswater occur to you as very suggestive?"

For perhaps the sixth time during this remarkable interview, Gideon wondered if he were not becoming light-headed. "I suppose it 's just because he has been lunching," he thought; and then added aloud, "to what figure may I go?"

"Perhaps five thousand would be enough for to-day," said Michael. "And now, sir, do not let me detain you any longer; the afternoon wears

; there are plenty of trains to Hampton Court; d I need n't try to describe to you the impatience my friend. Here is a five pound note for cur- nt expenses; and here is the address." And ichael began to write, paused, tore up the paper, d put the pieces in his pocket. "I will dictate," said, "my writing is so uncertain."

Gideon took down the address, "Count Tarnow, urnaul Villa, Hampton Court." Then he wrote mething else on a sheet of paper. "You said u had not chosen a solicitor," he said. "For a se of this sort, here is the best man in London." nd he handed the paper to Michael.

"God bless me!" ejaculated Michael, as he read s own address.

"Oh, I dare say you have seen his name nnected with some rather painful cases," said ideon. "But he is himself a perfectly honest an and his capacity is recognised. And now, ntlemen, it only remains for me to ask where shall communicate with you."

"The Langham, of course," returned Michael. Till to-night."

"Till to-night," replied Gideon, smiling. "I suppose I may knock you up at a late hour?"

"Any hour, any hour," cried the vanishing solicitor.

"Now there 's a young fellow with a head upon his shoulders," he said to Pitman, as soon as they were in the street.

Pitman was indistinctly heard to murmur, "Perfect fool."

"Not a bit of him," returned Michael. "He knows who 's the best solicitor in London, and it 's not every man can say the same. But, I say, did n't I pitch it in hot?"

Pitman returned no answer.

"Hullo!" said the lawyer, pausing, "what 's wrong with the long-suffering Pitman?"

"You had no right to speak of me as you did," the artist broke out; "your language was perfectly unjustifiable; you have wounded me deeply."

"I never said a word about you," replied Michael. "I spoke of Ezra Thomas; and do please remember that there 's no such party."

"It 's just as hard to bear," said the artist.

But by this time they had reached the corner of e by-street; and there was the faithful shoe-ack, standing by the horses' heads with a splen-d assumption of dignity; and there was the ano, pricking forlorn upon the cart, while the in beat upon its unprotected sides and trickled own its elegantly varnished legs.

The shoe-black was again put in requisition to ring five or six strong fellows from the neigh-ouring public-house; and the last battle of the mpaign opened. It is probable that Mr. Gideon orsyth had not yet taken his seat in the train or Hampton Court, before Michael opened the oor of the chambers, and the grunting porters eposited the Broadwood grand in the middle of e floor.

"And now," said the lawyer, after he had sent e men about their business, "one more precau-on. We must leave him the key of the piano, nd we must contrive that he shall find it. Let e see." And he built a square tower of cigars on the top of the instrument, and dropped the ey into the middle.

"Poor young man," said the artist, as they descended the stairs.

"He is in a devil of a position," assented Michael drily. "It 'll brace him up."

"And that reminds me," observed the excellent Pitman, "that I fear I displayed a most ungrateful temper. I had no right, I see, to resent expressions, wounding as they were, which were in no sense directed."

"That 's all right," cried Michael, getting on the cart. "Not a word more, Pitman. Very proper feeling on your part; no man of self-respect can stand by and hear his *alias* insulted."

The rain had now ceased, Michael was fairly sober, the body had been disposed of, and the friends were reconciled. The return to the mews was therefore (in comparison with previous stages of the day's adventures) quite a holiday outing; and when they had returned the cart and walked forth again from the stable-yard, unchallenged and even unsuspected, Pitman drew a deep breath of joy.

"And now," he said, "we can go home."

"Pitman," said the lawyer, stopping short, your recklessness fills me with concern. What! :e have been wet through the greater part of the ay, and you propose, in cold blood, to go home! Jo, sir — hot Scotch."

And taking his friend's arm he led him sternly oward the nearest public-house. Nor was Pitman (I regret to say) wholly unwilling. Now hat peace was restored and the body gone, a certain innocent skittishness began to appear in the nanners of the artist; and when he touched his teaming glass to Michael's, he giggled aloud like venturesome school-girl at a picnic.

CHAPTER IX

GLORIOUS CONCLUSION OF MICHAEL FINSBURY'S HOLIDAY

I KNOW Michael Finsbury personally; my business — I know the awkwardness of having such a man for a lawyer — still it 's an old story now, and there is such a thing as gratitude, and, in short, my legal business, although now (I am thankful to say) of quite a placid character, remains entirely in Michael's hands. But the trouble is I have no natural talent for addresses; I learn one for every man — that is friendship's offering; and the friend who subsequently changes his residence is dead to me memory refusing to pursue him. Thus it comes about that, as I always write to Michael at his office, I cannot swear to his number in the King's Road. Of course (like my neighbours), I have

been to dinner there. Of late years, since his accession to wealth, neglect of business, and election to the club, these little festivals have become common. He picks up a few fellows in the smoking-room — all men of Attic wit — myself, for instance, if he has the luck to find me disengaged; a string of hansoms may be observed (by her Majesty) bowling gaily through St. James's Park; and in a quarter of an hour the party surrounds one of the best appointed boards in London.

But at the time of which we write the house in the King's Road (let us still continue to call it No. 233) was kept very quiet; when Michael entertained guests it was at the halls of Nichol or Verrey that he would convene them, and the door of his private residence remained closed against his friends. The upper storey, which was sunny, was set apart for his father; the drawing-room was never opened; the dining-room was the scene of Michael's life. It is in this pleasant apartment, sheltered from the curiosity of King's Road by wire blinds, and entirely surrounded by the lawyer's unrivalled

library of poetry and criminal trials, that we find him sitting down to his dinner after his holiday with Pitman. A spare old lady, with very bright eyes and a mouth humorously compressed, waited upon the lawyer's needs; in every line of her countenance she betrayed the fact that she was an old retainer; in every word that fell from her lips she flaunted the glorious circumstance of a Scottish origin; and the fear with which this powerful combination fills the boldest was obviously no stranger to the bosom of our friend. The hot Scotch having somewhat warmed up the embers of the Heidsieck, it was touching to observe the master's eagerness to pull himself together under the servant's eye; and when he remarked: "I think, Teena, I 'll take a brandy and soda," he spoke like a man doubtful of his elocution, and not half certain of obedience.

"No such a thing, Mr. Michael," was the prompt return. "Clar't and water."

"Well, well, Teena, I dare say you know best," said the master. "Very fatiguing day at the office though."

"What?" said the retainer, "ye never were ar the office!"

"Oh, yes, I was though; I was repeatedly along eet Street," returned Michael.

"Pretty pliskies ye 've been at this day!" cried e old lady, with humourous alacrity; and then: Take care — don't break my crystal!" she cried, the lawyer came within an ace of knocking the asses off the table.

"And how is he keeping?" asked Michael.

"Oh, just the same, Mr. Michael, just the way 'll be till the end, worthy man!" was the reply. But ye 'll not be the first that 's asked me that e day."

"No?" said the lawyer. "Who else?"

"Ay, that 's a joke, too," said Teena, grimly. A friend of yours: Mr. Morris."

"Morris! What was the little beggar doing re?" inquired Michael.

"Wantin'? To see him," replied the house-eper, completing her meaning by a movement the thumb toward the upper storey. "That 's his way of it; but I 've an idee of my own.

He tried to bribe me, Mr. Michael. Bribe — me!" she repeated, with inimitable scorn. "That 's n kind of a young gentleman."

"Did he so?" said Michael. "I bet he did n' offer much."

"No more he did," replied Teena; nor coul any subsequent questioning elicit from her the sur with which the thrifty leather merchant had at tempted to corrupt her. "But I sent him abou his business," she said, gallantly. "He 'll not com here again in a hurry."

"He must n't see my father, you know; min that!" said Michael. "I 'm not going to hav any public exhibition to a little beast like him."

"No fear of me lettin' him," replied the trust one. "But the joke is this, Mr. Michael — se ye 're upsettin' the sauce, that 's a clean table-clot — the best of the joke is that he thinks you father 's dead and you 're keepin' it dark."

Michael whistled. "Set a thief to catch a thief, said he.

"Exac'ly what I told him!" cried the delighte dame.

"I'll make him dance for that," said Michael.
"Could n't ye get the law of him some way?"
ggested Teena, truculently.

"No, I don't think I could, and I 'm quite sure
don't want to," replied Michael. "But I say,
eena, I really don't believe this claret 's whole-
me; it 's not a sound, reliable wine. Give us a
randy and soda, there 's a good soul." Teena's
ce became like adamant. "Well, then," said
e lawyer, fretfully, "I won't eat any more
nner."

"Ye can please yourself about that, Mr.
ichael," said Teena, and began composedly to
ke away.

"I do wish Teena was n't a faithful servant!"
ghed the lawyer, as he issued into King's Road.
he rain had ceased; the wind still blew, but only
ith a pleasant freshness; the town, in the clear
rkness of the night, glittered with street-lamps
d shone with glancing rain-pools. "Come, this
better," thought the lawyer to himself, and he
alked on eastward, lending a pleased ear to the
heels and the million footfalls of the city.

Near the end of the King's Road he remem
bered his brandy and soda, and entered a flauntin
public-house. A good many persons were presen
a waterman from a cab-stand, half a dozen of th
chronically unemployed, a gentleman (in one co
ner) trying to sell æsthetic photographs out of
leather case to another and very youthful gentl
man with a yellow goatee, and a pair of love
debating some fine shade, in the other. But th
centre-piece and great attraction was a little o
man, in a black, ready-made surtout, which wa
obviously a recent purchase. On the marble tab
in front of him, beside a sandwich and a glass
beer, there lay a battered forage-cap. His har
fluttered abroad with oratorical gestures; his voic
naturally shrill, was plainly tuned to the pitch
the lecture-room; and by arts, comparable to tho
of the Ancient Mariner, he was now holding spe
bound the barmaid, the waterman, and four of t
unemployed.

"I have examined all the theatres in London
he was saying; "and pacing the principal entranc
I have ascertained them to be ridiculously disp

ttionate to the requirements of their audiences. e doors opened the wrong way — I forget at s moment which it is, but have a note of it at me; they were frequently locked during the formance, and when the auditorium was liter- v thronged with English people. You have bably not had my opportunities of comparing tant lands; but I can assure you this has been g ago recognised as a mark of aristocratic gov- nment. Do you suppose, in a country really self- verned, such abuses could exist? Your own elligence, however uncultivated, tells you they uld not. Take Austria, a country even possibly re enslaved than England. I have myself con- rsed with one of the survivors of the Ring The- e, and though his colloquial German was not y good, I succeeded in gathering a pretty clear a of his opinion of the case. But what will haps interest you still more, here is a cutting the subject from a Vienna newspaper, which I l now read to you, translating as I go. You see for yourselves; it is printed in the Ger- n character." And he held the cutting out for

verification, much as a conjurer passes a trick orange along the front bench.

"Hullo, old gentleman! is this you?" said Michael, laying his hand upon the orator's shoulder.

The figure turned with a convulsion of alarm, and showed the countenance of Mr. Joseph Finsbury.

"You, Michael!" he cried. "There's no one with you, is there?"

"No," replied Michael, ordering a brandy and soda, "there's nobody with me; whom do you expect?"

"I thought of Morris or John," said the old gentleman, evidently greatly relieved.

"What the devil would I be doing with Morris or John?" cried the nephew.

"There is something in that," returned Joseph. "And I believe I can trust you. I believe you will stand by me."

"I hardly know what you mean," said the lawyer, "but if you are in need of money I am flush."

"It's not that, my dear boy," said the uncle

king him by the hand. "I 'll tell you all about fterward."

"All right," responded the nephew. "I stand at, Uncle Joseph; what will you have?"

"In that case," replied the old gentleman, "I 'll e another sandwich. I dare say I surprise you," went on, "with my presence in a public-house; the fact is I act on a sound but little known nciple of my own ——"

"Oh, it 's better known than you suppose," said chael, sipping his brandy and soda. "I always on it myself when I want a drink."

The old gentleman, who was anxious to pro- iate Michael, laughed a cheerless laugh. "You ve such a flow of spirits," said he. "I am sure often find it quite amusing. But regarding this nciple of which I was about to speak. It is that accommodating one's self to the manners of any nd (however humble) in which our lot may be st. Now, in France, for instance, every one goes a café for his meals; in America to what is led a 'two-bit house'; in England the people ort to such an institution as the present for

refreshment. With sandwiches, tea, and an occa sional glass of bitter beer, a man can live luxu riously in London for fourteen pounds twelv shillings per annum."

"Yes, I know," returned Michael, "but that' not including clothes, washing, or boots. Th whole thing, with cigars and occasional sprees costs me over seven hundred a year."

But this was Michael's last interruption. H listened in good-humoured silence to the remain der of his uncle's lecture, which speedily branche to political reform, thence to the theory of th weather-glass, with an illustrative account of bora in the Adriatic; thence again to the best man ner of teaching arithmetic to the deaf-and-dumb and with that, the sandwich being then no more *explicuit valde feliciter*. A moment later the pai issued forth on the King's Road.

"Michael," said his uncle, "the reason that am here is because I cannot endure those nephew of mine. I find them intolerable."

"I dare say you do," assented Michael, "I neve could stand them for a moment."

"They would n't let me speak," continued the H gentleman, bitterly; "I never was allowed get a word in edgewise; I was shut up at once ith some impertinent remark. They kept me on ort allowance of pencils, when I wished to make otes of the most absorbing interest; the daily ewspaper was guarded from me like a young baby om a gorilla. Now, you know me, Michael. I ve for my calculations; I live for my manifold nd ever-changing views of life; pens and paper nd the productions of the popular press are to me important as food and drink; and my life was rowing quite intolerable when, in the confusion that fortunate railway accident at Browndean, made my escape. They must think me dead, nd are trying to deceive the world for the chance the tontine."

"By the way, how do you stand for money?" ked Michael, kindly.

"Pecuniarily speaking, I am rich," returned the d man, with cheerfulness. "I am living at esent at the rate of one hundred a year, with limited pens and paper; the British Museum at

which to get books; and all the newspapers I choose to read. But it 's extraordinary how little a man of intellectual interest requires to bother with books in a progressive age. The newspapers supply all the conclusions."

"I 'll tell you what," said Michael, "come and stay with me."

"Michael," said the old gentleman, "it 's very kind of you, but you scarcely understand what a peculiar position I occupy. There are some little financial complications; as a guardian my efforts were not altogether blessed; and not to put too fine a point upon the matter, I am absolutely in the power of that vile fellow, Morris."

"You should be disguised," cried Michael, eagerly. "I will lend you a pair of window-glass spectacles, and some red side-whiskers."

"I had already canvassed that idea," replied the old gentleman, "but feared to awaken remark in my unpretentious lodgings. The aristocracy, I am well aware ——"

"But see here," interrupted Michael, "how do you come to have any money at all? Don't make

stranger of me, Uncle Joseph; I know all about
e trust, and the hash you made of it, and the
ssignment you were forced to make to Morris."

Joseph narrated his dealings with the bank.

"Oh, but I say, this won't do," cried the lawyer.
You 've put your foot in it. You had no right
o do what you did."

"The whole thing is mine, Michael," protested
ne old gentleman. "I founded and nursed that
usiness on principles entirely of my own."

"That 's all very fine," said the lawyer; "but
ou made an assignment, you were forced to make
, too; even then your position was extremely
haky; but now, my dear sir, it means the
ock."

"It is n't possible," cried Joseph; "the law
annot be so unjust as that?"

"And the cream of the thing," interrupted
Michael, with a sudden shout of laughter, "the
ream of the thing is this, that of course you 've
owned the leather business! I must say, Uncle
oseph, you have strange ideas of law, but I like
our taste in humour."

"I see nothing to laugh at," observed Mr. Finsbury, tartly.

"And talking of that, has Morris any power to sign for the firm?" asked Michael.

"No one but myself," replied Joseph.

"Poor devil of a Morris. Oh, poor devil of a Morris!" cried the lawyer in delight. "And his keeping up the farce that you're at home! Oh, Morris, the Lord has delivered you into my hands! Let me see, Uncle Joseph, what do you suppose the leather business worth?"

"It *was* worth a hundred thousand," said Joseph, bitterly, "when it was in my hands. But then there came a Scotchman — it is supposed he had a certain talent — it was entirely directed to book-keeping — no accountant in London could understand a word of any of his books; and then there was Morris, who is perfectly incompetent. And now it is worth very little. Morris tried to sell it last year; and Pogram & Jarris offered only four thousand."

"I shall turn my attention to leather," said Michael with decision.

"You?" asked Joseph. "I advise you not. here is nothing in the whole field of commerce ore surprising than the fluctuations of the leather arket. Its sensitiveness may be described as orbid."

"And now, Uncle Joseph, what have you done ith all that money?" asked the lawyer.

"Paid it into a bank and drew twenty pounds," swered Mr. Finsbury promptly. "Why?"

"Very well," said Michael. "To-morrow I all send down a clerk with a cheque for a hun-red, and he'll draw out the original sum and turn it to the Anglo-Patagonian, with some sort explanation which I will try to invent for you. hat will clear your feet, and as Morris can't touch penny of it without forgery, it will do no harm my little scheme."

"But what am I to do?" asked Joseph, "I nnot live upon nothing."

"Don't you hear?" returned Michael. "I send u a cheque for a hundred; which leaves you ghty to go along upon; and when that's done, ply to me again."

"I would rather not be beholden to your bounty all the same," said Joseph, biting at his white moustache. "I would rather live on my own money, since I have it."

Michael grasped his arm. "Will nothing make you believe," he cried, "that I am trying to save you from Dartmoor?"

His earnestness staggered the old man. "I must turn my attention to law," he said; "it will be a new field; for though of course I understand its general principles, I have never really applied my mind to the details, and this view of yours, for example, comes on me entirely by surprise. But you may be right, and of course at my time of life — for I am no longer young — any really long term of imprisonment would be highly prejudicial. But, my dear nephew, I have no claim on you; you have no call to support me."

"That 's all right," said Michael; "I 'll probably get it out of the leather business."

And having taken down the old gentleman's address, Michael left him at the corner of a street.

"What a wonderful old muddler!" he reflected, and what a singular thing is life! I seem to be condemned to be the instrument of Providence. Let me see; what have I done to-day? Disposed of a dead body, saved Pitman, saved my uncle Joseph, brightened up Forsyth, and drunk a devil of a lot of most indifferent liquor. Let 's top off with a visit to my cousins, and be the instrument of Providence in earnest. To-morrow I can turn my attention to leather; to-night, I 'll just make it lively for 'em in a friendly spirit."

About a quarter of an hour later, as the clocks were striking eleven, the instrument of Providence descended from a hansom, and bidding the driver wait, rapped at the door of No. 16 John Street.

It was promptly opened by Morris.

"Oh, it 's you, Michael," he said, carefully blocking up the narrow opening: "it 's very late."

Michael without a word reached forth, grasped Morris warmly by the hand, and gave it so extreme a squeeze that the sullen householder fell back. Profiting by this movement, the lawyer

obtained a footing in the lobby and marched into the dining-room, with Morris at his heels.

"Where's my uncle Joseph?" demanded Michael, sitting down in the most comfortable chair.

"He's not been very well lately," replied Morris; "he's staying at Browndean; John is nursing him; and I am alone, as you see."

Michael smiled to himself. "I want to see him on particular business," he said.

"You can't expect to see my uncle, when you won't let me see your father," returned Morris.

"Fiddlestick," said Michael. "My father is my father; but Joseph is just as much my uncle as he's yours; and you have no right to sequestrate his person."

"I do no such thing," said Morris, doggedly. "He is not well; he is dangerously ill and nobody can see him."

"I'll tell you what, then," said Michael. "I'll make a clean breast of it. I have come down like the opossum, Morris; I have come to compromise."

Poor Morris turned as pale as death, and then a flush of wrath against the injustice of man's

estiny dyed his very temples. "What do you ean?" he cried. "I don't believe a word of !" And when Michael had assured him of his riousness, "Well, then," he cried, with another ep flush, "I won't; so you can put that in your pe and smoke it."

"Oho!" said Michael, queerly. "You say your ncle is dangerously ill, and you won't com-romise? There 's something very fishy about at."

"What do you mean?" cried Morris, hoarsely.

"I only say it 's fishy," returned Michael, "that , pertaining to the finny tribe."

"Do you mean to insinuate anything?" cried Morris, stormily, trying the high hand.

"Insinuate?" repeated Michael. "Oh, don't t 's begin to use awkward expressions! Let us rown our differences in a bottle, like two affable nsmen. *The Two Affable Kinsmen,* sometimes tributed to Shakespeare," he added.

Morris' mind was labouring like a mill. "Does e suspect? or is this chance and stuff? Should soap, or should I bully? Soap," he concluded.

"It gains time. Well," said he aloud, and with rather a painful affectation of heartiness, "it long since we have had an evening together Michael; and though my habits (as you know) ar very temperate, I may as well make an exception Excuse me one moment, till I fetch a bottle o whisky from the cellar."

"No whisky for me," said Michael; "a little o the old still champagne or nothing."

For a moment Morris stood irresolute, for th wine was very valuable; the next he had quitte the room without a word. His quick mind ha perceived his advantage; in thus dunning him fo the cream of the cellar, Michael was playing int his hand. "One bottle?" he thought. "B George, I'll give him two! this is no momen for economy; and once the beast is drunk, it strange if I don't wring his secret out of him."

With two bottles, accordingly, he returne Glasses were produced, and Morris filled the with hospitable grâce.

"I drink to you, cousin!" he cried, gail "Don't spare the wine-cup in my house."

Michael drank his glass deliberately, standing the table; filled it again, and returned to his air, carrying the bottle along with him.

"The spoils of war!" he said, apologetically. The weakest goes to the wall. Science, Morris, ience." Morris could think of no reply, and for appreciable interval silence reigned. But two asses of the still champagne produced a rapid ange in Michael.

"There 's a want of vivacity about you, Morris," observed. "You may be deep; but I 'll be nged if you 're vivacious!"

"What makes you think me deep?" asked orris, with an air of pleased simplicity.

"Because you won't compromise," said the wyer. "You 're deep dog, Morris, very deep g, not t' compromise — remarkable deep dog. nd a very good glass of wine; it 's the only spectable feature in the Finsbury family, this ne; rarer thing than a title — much rarer. ow, a man with glass wine like this in cellar, wonder why won't compromise?"

"Well, *you* would n' compromise before, you

know," said the smiling Morris. "Turn about i fair play."

"I wonder why *I* would n' compromise? wonder why *you* would n'?" inquired Michael "I wonder why we each think the other would n' 'S quite a remarrable — remarkable problem," h added, triumphing over oral obstacles, not withou obvious pride. "Wonder what we each think — don't you?"

"What do you suppose to have been my rea son?" asked Morris, adroitly.

Michael looked at him and winked. "Tha cool," said he. "Next thing, you 'll ask me to hel you out of the muddle. I know I 'm emissary o Providence, but not that kind! You get out of yourself, like Æsop and the other fellow. Mus be dreadful muddle for young orphan o' forty leather business and all!"

"I am sure I don't know what you mean," sai Morris.

"Not sure I know myself," said Michael. "Th is exc'lent vintage, sir — exc'lent vintage. Not ing against the tipple. Only thing; here 's a val

le uncle disappeared. Now, what I want to ow: where 's valuable uncle?"

"I have told you: he is at Browndean," an-ered Morris, furtively wiping his brow, for these peated hints began to tell upon him cruelly.

"Very easy say Brown — Browndee — no' so sy after all!" cried Michael. "Easy say; any-ing 's easy say, when you can say it. What I n' like 's total disappearance of an uncle. Not siness-like." And he wagged his head.

"It is all perfectly simple," returned Morris, ith laborious calm. "There is no mystery. He ays at Browndean, where he got a shake in the cident."

"Ah!" said Michael, "got devil of a shake?"

"Why do you say that?" cried Morris, sharply.

"Best possible authority. Told me so yourself," id the lawyer. "But if you tell me contrary w, of course I 'm bound to believe either the e story or the other. Point is — I 've upset is bottle, still champagne 's exc'lent thing car-t — point is, is valuable uncle dead — an' — ry?"

Morris sprang from his seat. "What 's tha you say?" he gasped.

"I say it 's exc'lent thing carpet," replie Michael, rising. "Exc'lent thing promote health action of the skin. Well, it 's all one, anyway Give my love to Uncle Champagne."

"You 're not going away?" said Morris.

"Awf'ly sorry, ole man. Got to sit up sic friend," said the wavering Michael.

"You shall not go till you have explained you hints," returned Morris, fiercely. "What do yo mean? What brought you here?"

"No offence, I trust," said the lawyer, turn ing round as he opened the door; "only doin my duty as shemishery of Providence."

Groping his way to the front-door, he opene it with some difficulty, and descended the step to the hansom. The tired driver looked up a he approached, and asked where he was to g next.

Michael observed that Morris had followed hi to the steps; a brilliant inspiration came to hin "Anything t' give pain," he reflected. . . . "Driv

cotlan' Yard," he added aloud, holding to the eel to steady himself; "there 's something devil- fishy, cabby, about those cousins. Mush' be ared up! Drive Shcotlan' Yard."

"You don't mean that, sir," said the man, with e ready sympathy of the lower orders for an oxicated gentleman. "I had better take you me, sir; you can go to Scotland Yard to- orrow."

"Is it as friend or as perfessional man you vise me not to go Shcotlan' Yard t'night?" in- ired Michael. "All righ', never min' Shcotlan' ard, drive Gaiety bar."

"The Gaiety bar is closed," said the man.

"Then home," said Michael, with the same eerfulness.

"Where to, sir?"

"I don't remember, I 'm sure," said Michael, tering the vehicle, "drive Shcotlan' Yard and k."

"But you 'll have a card," said the man, through e little aperture in the top, "give me your rd-case."

"What imagi — imagination in a cabby!" crie the lawyer, producing his card-case, and handin it to the driver.

The man read it by the light of the lamp. "M Michael Finsbury, 233 King's Road, Chelsea. I that it, sir?"

"Right you are," cried Michael, "drive ther if you can see way."

CHAPTER X

GIDEON FORSYTH AND THE BROADWOOD GRAND

THE reader has perhaps read that remarkable work, *Who Put Back the Clock?* by E. H. B., which appeared for several ys upon the railway bookstalls and then van-ed entirely from the face of the earth. Whether ting Time makes the chief of his diet out of d editions; whether Providence has passed a ecial enactment on behalf of authors; or whether ese last have taken the law into their own hand, und themselves into a dark conspiracy with a ssword, which I would die rather than reveal, d night after night sally forth under some vig-ous leader, such as Mr. James Payn or Mr. alter Besant, on their task of secret spoliation certain it is, at least, that the old editions pass, ving place to new. To the proof, it is believed

there are now only three copies extant of *Who Put Back the Clock?* one in the British Museum, successfully concealed by a wrong entry in the catalogue; another in one of the cellars (the cellar where the music accumulates) of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh; and a third, bound in morocco, in the possession of Gideon Forsyth. To account for the very different fate attending this third exemplar, the readiest theory is to suppose that Gideon admired the tale. How to explain that admiration might appear (to those who have perused the work) more difficult; but the weakness of a parent is extreme, and Gideon (and not his uncle, whose initials he had humorously borrowed) was the author of *Who Put Back the Clock?* He had never acknowledged it, or only to some intimate friends while it was still in proof; after its appearance and alarming failure, the modesty of the novelist had become more pressing, and the secret was now likely to be better kept than that of the authorship of *Waverley*.

A copy of the work (for the date of my tale is already yesterday) still figured in dusty solitude

tthe bookstall at Waterloo; and Gideon, as he ssed with his ticket for Hampton Court, smiled ntemptuously at the creature of his thoughts. hat an idle ambition was the author's! How beneath him was the practice of that childish ! With his hand closing on his first brief, he t himself a man at last; and the muse who esides over the police romance, a lady presumly of French extraction, fled his neighbourhood, d returned to join the dance round the springs Helicon, among her Grecian sisters.

Robust, practical reflection still cheered the ung barrister upon his journey. Again and ain he selected the little country house in its et of great oaks, which he was to make his ture home. Like a prudent householder, he proted improvements as he passed; to one he added stable, to another a tennis court, a third he suped with a becoming, rustic boat-house.

"How little a while ago," he could not but rect, "I was a careless young dog with no thought t to be comfortable! I cared for nothing but ating and detective novels. I would have passed

an old-fashioned country-house with large kitchen-garden, stabling, boat-house, and spacious offices, without so much as a look, and certainly would have made no inquiry as to the drains. How a man ripens with the years!"

The intelligent reader will perceive the ravages of Miss Hazeltine. Gideon had carried Julia straight to Mr. Bloomfield's house; and that gentleman, having been led to understand she was the victim of oppression, had noisily espoused her cause. He worked himself into a fine breathing heat; in which, to a man of his temperament, action became needful.

"I do not know which is the worse," he cried, "the fraudulent old villain or the unmanly young cub. I will write to the *Pall Mall* and expose them. Nonsense, sir; they must be exposed. It 's a public duty. Did you not tell me the fellow was a Tory? Oh, the uncle is a radical lecturer, is he? No doubt, the uncle has been grossly wronged. But of course, as you say, that makes a change; it becomes scarce so much a public duty."

And he sought and instantly found a fresh

utlet for his alacrity. Miss Hazeltine (he now erceived) must be kept out of the way; his house-oat was lying ready — he had returned but a day r two before from his usual cruise; there was o place like a houseboat for concealment; and at very morning, in the teeth of the easterly ale, Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield and Miss Julia Hazeltine had started forth on their untimely voy-ge. Gideon pled in vain to be allowed to join the arty. "No, Gid," said his uncle. "You will be vatched; you must keep away from us." Nor ad the barrister ventured to contest this strange lusion; for he feared if he rubbed off any of ie romance, that Mr. Bloomfield might weary of ie whole affair. And his discretion was rewarded; or the Squirradical, laying a heavy hand upon his ephew's shoulder, had added these notable expres-ons: "I see what you are after, Gid. But if ou're going to get the girl, you have to work, r."

These pleasing sounds had cheered the barris-r all day, as he sat reading in chambers; they ontinued to form the ground-base of his manly

musings as he was whirled to Hampton Cour even when he landed at the station, and began pull himself together for his delicate interview, th voice of Uncle Ned and the eyes of Julia were n forgotten.

But now it began to rain surprises: in a Hampton Court, there was no Kurnaul Villa, r Count Tarnow, and no count. This was strang but viewed in the light of the incoherency of h instructions, not perhaps inexplicable; Mr. Dic son had been lunching, and he might have mad some fatal oversight in the address. What wa the thoroughly prompt, manly, and business-lik step? thought Gideon; and he answered himse at once: "A telegram, very laconic." Speedil the wires were flashing the following very im portant missive: "Dickson, Langham Hotel. Vil and persons both unknown here, suppose erroneo address; follow self next train. Forsyth." And the Langham Hotel, sure enough, with a brow e pressive of despatch and intellectual effort, Gide descended not long after from a smoking hansom

I do not suppose that Gideon will ever forg

the Langham Hotel. No Count Tarnow was one thing; no John Dickson and no Ezra Thomas, quite another. How, why, and what next, danced in his bewildered brain; from every centre of what we playfully call the human intellect, incongruous messages were telegraphed; and before the hubbub of dismay had quite subsided, the barrister found himself driving furiously for his chambers. There was at least a cave of refuge; it was at least a place to think in; and he climbed the stair, put his key in the lock and opened the door, with some approach to hope.

It was all dark within, for the night had some time fallen; but Gideon knew his room, he knew where the matches stood on the end of the chimney-piece; and he advanced boldly, and in so doing dashed himself against a heavy body, where (slightly altering the expressions of the song) no heavy body should have been. There had been nothing there when Gideon went out, he had locked the door behind him, he had found it locked on his return, no one could have entered, the furniture could not have changed its own posi-

tion. And yet undeniably there was a something there. He thrust out his hands in the darkness. Yes, there was something, something large, something smooth, something cold.

"Heaven forgive me!" said Gideon, "it feels like a piano."

And the next moment he remembered the vesta in his waistcoat pocket and had struck a light.

It was indeed a piano that met his doubtful gaze, a vast and costly instrument, stained with the rain of the afternoon and defaced with recent scratches. The light of the vesta was reflected from the varnished sides, like a star in quiet water; and in the farther end of the room, the shadow of that strange visitor loomed bulkily and wavered on the wall.

Gideon let the match burn to his fingers, and the darkness close once more on his bewilderment. Then with trembling hands he lit the lamp and drew near. Near or far, there was no doubt of the fact: the thing was a piano. There, where by all the laws of God and man it was impossible that it should be — there the thing impudently stood. Gideon threw open the keyboard and

uck a chord. Not a sound disturbed the quiet the room. "Is there anything wrong with e?" he thought, with a pang; and drawing in seat, obstinately persisted in his attempts to wish silence, now with sparkling arpeggios, now th a sonata of Beethoven's which (in happier ys) he knew to be one of the loudest pieces of at powerful composer. Still not a sound. He ve the Broadwood two great bangs with his enched fists. All was still as the grave.

The young barrister started to his feet.

"I am stark-staring mad," he cried aloud, "and one knows it but myself. God's worst curse s fallen on me."

His fingers encountered his watch-chain; in-antly he had plucked forth his watch and held to his ear. He could hear it ticking.

"I am not deaf," he said aloud. "I am only sane. My mind has quitted me for ever."

He looked uneasily about the room, and gazed th lack-lustre eyes at the chair in which Mr. ickson had installed himself. The end of a cigar y near it on the fender.

"No," he thought, "I don't believe that was dream; but God knows my mind is failing rapidl I seem to be hungry, for instance; it 's probab another hallucination. Still I might try. I sha have one more good meal; I shall go to the Ca Royal, and may possibly be removed from the direct to the asylum."

He wondered with morbid interest, as he d scended the stairs, how he would first betray h terrible condition — would he attack a waiter? eat glass? — and when he had mounted into cab, he bade the man drive to Nichol's with lurking fear that there was no such place.

The flaring, gassy entrance of the café speed set his mind at rest; he was cheered besides recognise his favourite waiter; his orders appear to be coherent; the dinner, when it came, w quite a sensible meal, and he ate it with enjoyme "Upon my word," he reflected, "I am abo tempted to indulge a hope. Have I been hast Have I done what Robert Skill would have done Robert Skill (I need scarcely mention) was t name of the principal character in *Who Put Ba*

the Clock? It had occurred to the author as a brilliant and probable invention; to readers of critical turn, Robert appeared scarce upon a level with his surname; but it is the difficulty of the police romance, that the reader is always a man of such vastly greater ingenuity than the writer. In the eyes of his creator, however, Robert Skill was a word to conjure with; the thought braced and spurred him; what that brilliant creature would have done, Gideon would do also. This frame of mind is not uncommon: the distressed general, the baited divine, the hesitating author, decide severally to do what Napoleon, what St. Paul, what Shakespeare would have done; and there remains only the minor question, What is that? In Gideon's case, one thing was clear: Skill was a man of singular decision, he would have taken some step (whatever it was) at once; and the only step that Gideon could think of was to return to his chambers.

This being achieved, all further inspiration failed him, and he stood pitifully staring at the instrument of his confusion. To touch the keys

again was more than he durst venture on; wheth
they had maintained their former silence, or r
sponded with the tones of the last trump, it wou
have equally dethroned his resolution. "It may
a practical jest," he reflected, "though it seem
elaborate and costly. And yet what else can it be
It *must* be a practical jest." And just then h
eye fell upon a feature which seemed corroborati
of that view; the pagoda of cigars which Micha
had erected ere he left the chambers. "Wh
that?" reflected Gideon. "It seems entirely irr
sponsible." And drawing near, he gingerly d
molished it. "A key," he thought. "Why tha
And why so conspicuously placed?" He made th
circuit of the instrument, and perceived the ke
hole at the back. "Aha! this is what the key
for," said he. "They wanted me to look insid
Stranger and stranger." And with that, he turn
the key and raised the lid.

In what antics of agony, in what fits of fligh
resolution, in what collapses of despair, Gide
consumed the night, it would be ungenerous
inquire too closely.

That trill of tiny song with which the eaves-
ds of London welcome the approach of day,
und him limp and rumpled and bloodshot, and
th a mind still vacant of resource. He rose and
oked forth unrejoicingly on blinded windows, an
npty street, and the grey daylight dotted with
e yellow lamps. There are mornings when the
y seems to awake with a sick headache; this
as one of them; and still the twittering reveille
the sparrows stirred in Gideon's spirit.

"Day here," he thought, "and I still helpless!
his must come to an end." And he locked up
e piano, put the key in his pocket, and set forth
quest of coffee. As he went, his mind trudged
r the hundredth time a certain mill-road of ter-
rs, misgivings, and regrets. To call in the
lice, to give up the body, to cover London
th handbills describing John Dickson and Ezra
homas, to fill the papers with paragraphs, *Mys-
ious Occurrence in the Temple — Mr. Forsyth
mitted to bail,* this was one course, an easy
urse, a safe course; but not, the more he re-
cted on it, not a pleasant one. For, was it not

to publish abroad a number of singular facts about himself? A child ought to have seen through the story of these adventures, and he had gaped and swallowed it. A barrister of the least self-respect should have refused to listen to clients who came before him in a manner so irregular, and he had listened. And oh, if he had only listened; but he had gone upon their errand — he, a barrister, uninstructed even by the shadow of a solicitor — upon an errand fit only for a private detective; and alas! — and for the hundredth time, the blood surged to his brow — he had taken their money! "No," said he, "the thing is as plain as St. Paul's. I shall be dishonoured! I have smashed my career for a five-pound note."

Between the possibility of being hanged in all innocence, and the certainty of a public and merited disgrace, no gentleman of spirit could long hesitate. After three gulps of that hot, snuffy, and muddy beverage that passes on the streets of London for a decoction of the coffee berry, Gideon's mind was made up. He would do without the police. He must face the other side of the di-

ıma, and be Robert Skill in earnest. What ıuld Robert Skill have done? How does a gen-ıan dispose of a dead body, honestly come by? : remembered the inimitable story of the hunch-ck; reviewed its course, and dismissed it for a rthless guide. It was impossible to prop a rpse on the corner of Tottenham Court Road, thout arousing fatal curiosity in the bosoms of e passers by; as for lowering it down a London imney, the physical obstacles were insurmount-le. To get it on board a train and drop it out, on the top of an omnibus and drop it off, were ıally out of the question. To get it on a yacht d drop it overboard, was more conceivable; but a man of moderate means, it seemed extrava-nt. The hire of the yacht was in itself a con-eration; the subsequent support of the whole w (which seemed a necessary consequence) was ıply not to be thought of. His uncle and the ıseboat here occurred in very luminous colours his mind. A musical composer (say, of the ne of Jimson) might very well suffer, like Ho-th's musician before him, from the disturbances

of London. He might very well be pressed fo time to finish an opera — say the comic oper *Orange Pekoe — Orange Pekoe,* music by Jimso — " this young maestro, one of the most promis ing of our recent English school " — vigorous en trance of the drums, etc. — the whole characte of Jimson and his music arose in bulk before th mind of Gideon. What more likely than Jimson' arrival with a grand piano (say, at Padwick), an his residence in a houseboat alone with the unfin ished score of *Orange Pekoe?* His subsequen disappearance, leaving nothing behind but a empty piano case, it might be more difficult t account for. And yet even that was susceptibl of explanation. For, suppose Jimson had gon mad over a fugal passage, and had thereupon de stroyed the accomplice of his infamy, and plunge into the welcome river? What end, on the whole more probable for a modern musician?

" By Jove, I 'll do it," cried Gideon. " Jimso is the boy! "

CHAPTER XI

THE MAESTRO JIMSON

MR. EDWARD HUGH BLOOMFIELD having announced his intention to stay in the neighbourhood of Maidenhead, what more probable than that the Maestro Jimson should turn his mind toward Padwick? Near this pleasant river-side village, he remembered to have observed an ancient, weedy houseboat lying moored beside a tuft of willows. It had stirred in him, in his careless hours, as he pulled down the river under a more familiar name, a certain sense of the romantic; and when the nice contrivance of his story was already complete in his mind, he had come near pulling it all down again, like an ungrateful clock, in order to introduce a chapter in which Robert Skill (who was always being decoyed somewhere) should be decoyed on board that lonely hulk by Lord Bellew and the American

desperado Gin Sling. It was fortunate he had not done so, he reflected; since the hulk was now required for very different purposes.

Jimson, a man of inconspicuous costume, but insinuating manners, had little difficulty in finding the hireling who had charge of the houseboat, and still less in persuading him to resign his care. The rent was almost nominal, the entry immediate, the key was exchanged against a suitable advance in money; and Jimson returned to town by the afternoon train to see about despatching his piano.

"I will be down to-morrow," he had said, reassuringly. "My opera is waited for with such impatience, you know."

And, sure enough, about the hour of noon on the following day, Jimson might have been observed ascending the river-side road that goes from Padwick to Great Haverham, carrying in one hand a basket of provisions, and under the other arm a leather case containing (it is to be conjectured) the score of *Orange Pekoe*. It was October weather; the stone-grey sky was full of larks; the leaden mirror of the Thames brightened with

ttumnal foliage, and the fallen leaves of the estnuts chirped under the composer's footing. here is no time of the year in England more urageous; and Jimson, though he was not with- t his troubles, whistled as he went.

A little above Padwick, the river lies very soli- ry. On the opposite shore the trees of a private ark inclose the view, the chimneys of the man- on just pricking forth above their clusters; on e near side, the path is bordered by willows. lose among these lay the houseboat, a thing so iled by the tears of the overhanging willows, so rown upon with parasites, so decayed, so bat- red, so neglected, such a haunt of rats, so adver- sed a storehouse of rheumatic agonies, that the art of an intending occupant might well recoil. plank, by way of flying drawbridge, joined it to e shore. And it was a dreary moment for Jim- n when he pulled this after him and found him- lf alone on this unwholesome fortress. He could ar the rats scuttle and flop in the abhorred in- rior; the key cried among the wards like a thing pain; the sitting-room was deep in dust, and

smelt strong of bilge-water. It could not be called a cheerful spot, even for a composer absorbed in beloved toil; how much less for a young gentleman, haunted by alarms and awaiting the arrival of a corpse!

He sat down, cleared away a piece of the table and attacked the cold luncheon in his basket. In case of any subsequent inquiry into the fate of Jimson, it was desirable he should be little seen; in other words, that he should spend the day entirely in the house; to this end, and further to corroborate his fable, he had brought in the leather case not only writing-materials, but a ream of large-size music paper, such as he considered suitable for an ambitious character like Jimson's.

"And now to work," said he, when he had satisfied his appetite. "We must leave traces of the wretched man's activity." And he wrote in bold characters:

ORANGE PEKOE

Op. 17

J. B. JIMSON

Vocal and p. f. score

"I suppose they never do begin like this," re-cted Gideon; "but then it 's quite out of the estion for me to tackle a full score, and Jimson s so unconventional. A dedication would be und convincing, I believe. 'Dedicated to' (let e see) 'to William Ewart Gladstone, by his edient servant the composer.' And now some usic: I had better avoid the overture, it seems present difficulties. Let 's give an air for the nor: Key — O, something modern! — seven arps." And he made a business-like signature ross the staves, and then paused and browsed r awhile on the handle of his pen. Melody, th no better inspiration than a sheet of paper, not usually found to spring unbidden in the nd of the amateur; nor is the key of seven arps a place of much repose to the untried. He st away that sheet. "It will help to build up e character of Jimson," Gideon remarked; and ain waited on the muse, in various keys and on vers sheets of paper, but all with results so in-nsiderable that he stood aghast. "It 's very d," thought he. "I seem to have less fancy

than I thought; or this is an off-day with me yet Jimson must leave something." And again he bent himself to the task.

Presently the penetrating chill of the houseboa began to attack the very seat of life. He desisted from his unremunerative trial; and to the audible annoyance of the rats, walked briskly up and down the cabin. Still he was cold. "This is all non sense," said he. "I don't care about the risk but I will not catch a catarrh. I must get out o this den."

He stepped on deck, and passing to the bow o his embarcation, looked for the first time up the river. He started. Only a few hundred yards above another houseboat lay moored among the willows. It was very spick and span, an elegant canoe hung at the stern, the windows were con cealed by snowy curtains; a flag floated from staff. The more Gideon looked at it the mor there mingled with his disgust a sense of impo tent surprise. It was very like his uncle's house boat; it was exceedingly like, it was identica But for two circumstances he could have sworn

as the same. The first, that his uncle had gone Maidenhead, might be explained away by that ghtiness of purpose which is so common a trait mong the more than usually manly. The sec-nd, however, was conclusive. It was not in the ast like Mr. Bloomfield to display a banner on is floating residence; and if he ever did, it would ertainly be dyed in hues of emblematical pro-riety. Now the Squirradical, like the vast ma-ority of the more manly, had drawn knowledge t the wells of Cambridge — he was wooden spoon n the year 1850; and the flag upon the houseboat treamed on the afternoon air with the colours of hat seat of Toryism, that cradle of Puseyism, hat home of the inexact and the effete — Oxford.

Still it was strangely like, thought Gideon.

And as he thus looked and thought, the door pened, and a young lady stepped forth on deck. he barrister dropped and fled into his cabin; it as Julia Hazeltine! Through the window he atched her draw in the canoe, get on board of , cast off, and come dropping down stream in is direction.

"Well, all is up now," said he, and he fell on a seat.

"Good-afternoon, miss," said a voice on the water. Gideon knew it for the voice of his landlord.

"Good-afternoon," replied Julia, "but I don't know who you are; do I? Oh, yes, I do though. You are the nice man that gave us leave to sketch from the old houseboat."

Gideon's heart leaped with fear.

"That 's it," returned the man. "And what I wanted to say was as you could n't do it any more. You see I 've let it."

"Let it!" cried Julia.

"Let it for a month," said the man. "Seems strange, don't it? Can't see what the party wants with it!"

"It seems very romantic of him, I think," said Julia. "What sort of a person is he?"

Julia in her canoe, the landlord in his wherry were close alongside, and holding on by the gunwale of the houseboat; so that not a word was lost on Gideon.

"He 's a music man," said the landlord, "or least that 's what he told me, miss; come down e to write an op'ra."

"Really!" cried Julia, "I never heard of anyng so delightful! Why, we shall be able to slip wn at night and hear him improvise! What is name?"

"Jimson," said the man.

"Jimson?" repeated Julia, and interrogated her mory in vain. But indeed our rising school of glish music boasts so many professors that we ely hear of one till he is made a baronet. "Are u sure you have it right?"

"Made him spell it to me," replied the landd. "J-I-M-S-O-N — Jimson; and his op'ra 's led — some kind of tea."

"*Some kind of tea!*" cried the girl. "What a y singular name for an opera! What can it be ut?" And Gideon heard her pretty laughter w abroad. "We must try to get acquainted with s Mr. Jimson; I feel sure he must be nice."

"Well, miss, I 'm afraid I must be going on. e got to be at Haverham, you see."

"Oh, don't let me keep you, you kind man!" said Julia. "Good-afternoon."

"Good-afternoon to you, miss."

Gideon sat in the cabin a prey to the most ha rowing thoughts. Here he was anchored to a ro ting houseboat, soon to be anchored to it still mo emphatically by the presence of the corpse; ar here was the country buzzing about him, ar young ladies already proposing pleasure parti to surround his house at night. Well, that mea the gallows; and much he cared for that. Wh troubled him now was Julia's indescribable levit That girl would scrape acquaintance with an body; she had no reserve, none of the enamel the lady. She was familiar with a brute like h landlord; she took an immediate interest (whi she lacked even the delicacy to conceal) in a cre ture like Jimson! He could conceive her aski Jimson to have tea with her! And it was for girl like this that a man like Gideon —— Dow manly heart!

He was interrupted by a sound that sent hi whipping behind the door in a trice. Miss Haz

ee had stepped on board the houseboat. Her
etch was promising; judging from the stillness
e supposed Jimson not yet come; and she had
cided to seize occasion and complete the work
art. Down she sat therefore in the bow, pro-
ced her block and water-colours, and was soon
nging over (what used to be called) the ladylike
complishment. Now and then indeed her song
as interrupted, as she searched in her memory
r some of the odious little receipts by means of
hich the game is practised — or used to be prac-
ed in the brave days of old; they say the world,
d those ornaments of the world, young ladies,
e become more sophisticated now; but Julia had
obably studied under Pitman, and she stood firm
the old ways.

Gideon, meanwhile, stood behind the door,
raid to move, afraid to breathe, afraid to think
what must follow, racked by confinement and
rne to the ground with tedium. This particular
ase, he felt with gratitude, could not last for
er; whatever impended (even the gallows, he
terly and perhaps erroneously reflected) could

not fail to be a relief. To calculate cubes occurre to him as an ingenious and even profitable refug from distressing thoughts, and he threw his man hood into that dreary exercise.

Thus, then, were these two young persons occu pied, Gideon attacking the perfect number witl resolution; Julia vigorously stippling incongruou colours on her block, when Providence despatche into these waters a steam launch asthmaticall panting up the Thames. All along the banks th water swelled and fell, and the reeds rustled. Th houseboat itself, that ancient stationary creature became suddenly imbued with life, and rolle briskly at her moorings, like a sea-going shi when she begins to smell the harbour bar. Th wash had nearly died away, and the quick pantin of the launch sounded already faint and far of when Gideon was startled by a cry from Julia Peering through the window, he beheld her sta ing disconsolately down stream at the fast-van ishing canoe. The barrister (whatever were h faults) displayed on this occasion a promptitud worthy of his hero, Robert Skill; with one effo

his mind he foresaw what was about to follow; th one movement of his body he dropped to the or and crawled under the table.

Julia, on her part, was not yet alive to her sition. She saw she had lost the canoe, and e looked forward with something less than idity to her next interview with Mr. Bloomld; but she had no idea that she was imprised, for she knew of the plank bridge.

She made the circuit of the house, and found e door open and the bridge withdrawn. It was ain, then, that Jimson must have come; plain, o, that he must be on board. He must be a ry shy man to have suffered this invasion of his sidence, and made no sign; and her courage se higher at the thought. He must come now, e must force him from his privacy, for the plank as too heavy for her single strength; so she tapped on the open door. Then she tapped again.

"Mr. Jimson," she cried, "Mr. Jimson! here, me! — you *must* come, you know, sooner or er, for I can't get off without you. Oh, don't so exceedingly silly! Oh, please, come!"

Still there was no reply.

"If he *is* here he must be mad," she though with a little fear. And the next moment she re membered he had probably gone abroad like her self in a boat. In that case, she might as we see the houseboat, and she pushed open the doo and stepped in. Under the table, where h lay smothered with dust, Gideon's heart stoo still.

There were the remains of Jimson's lunch. "H likes rather nice things to eat," she thought. "Oh I am sure he is quite a delightful man. I wonde if he is as good-looking as Mr. Forsyth. Mr Jimson — I don't believe it sounds as nice as Mr Forsyth; but then 'Gideon' is so really odious And here is some of his music too; this is deligh ful. *Orange Pekoe* — Oh, that 's what he mean by some kind of tea." And she trilled wit laughter. "*Adagio molto espressivo, sempre l gato,*" she read next. (For the literary part of composer's business Gideon was well equipped "How very strange to have all these direction and only three or four notes! Oh, here 's anoth

h some more. *Andante patetico.*" And she ran to glance over the music. "O dear me," thought, "he must be terribly modern! It seems discords to me. Let 's try the air. It very strange, it seems familiar." She began to g it, and suddenly broke off with laughter. Why, it 's *Tommy make room for your Uncle!*" cried aloud, so that the soul of Gideon was ed with bitterness. "*Andante patetico,* indeed! e man must be a mere impostor."

And just at this moment there came a con- ed, scuffling sound from underneath the table; strange note, like that of a barn-door fowl, nered in a most explosive sneeze; the head of sufferer was at the same time brought smartly contact with the boards above; and the sneeze s followed by a hollow groan.

Julia fled to the door, and there with the salu- y instinct of the brave, turned and faced the nger. There was no pursuit. The sounds con- ued; below the table a crouching figure was listinctly to be seen jostled by the throes of a eezing fit; and that was all.

"Surely," thought Julia, "this is most unusu behaviour. He cannot be a man of the world!"

Meanwhile the dust of years had been disturbe by the young barrister's convulsions; and th sneezing fit was succeeded by a passionate acce of coughing.

Julia began to feel a certain interest. "I a afraid you are really quite ill," she said, drawin a little nearer. "Please don't let me put you ou and do not stay under that table, Mr. Jimso Indeed it cannot be good for you."

Mr. Jimson only answered by a distressin cough; and the next moment the girl was on h knees and their faces had almost knocked togeth under the table.

"Oh, my gracious goodness!" exclaimed Mi Hazeltine, and sprang to her feet. "Mr. Forsy gone mad!"

"I am not mad," said the gentleman rueful extricating himself from his position. "Dear Miss Hazeltine, I vow to you upon my knees am not mad!"

"You are not!" she cried, panting.

"I know," he said, "that to a superficial eye conduct may appear unconventional."

'If you are not mad, it was no conduct at all," ed the girl, with a flash of colour, "and showed u did not care one penny for my feelings!"

"This is the very devil and all. I know — I mit that," cried Gideon, with a great effect of nly candour.

"It was abominable conduct!" said Julia, with ergy.

"I know it must have shaken your esteem," said e barrister. "But, dearest Miss Hazeltine, I beg you to hear me out; my behaviour, strange as may seem, is not unsusceptible of explanation; d I positively cannot and will not consent to ntinue to try to exist without — without the eem of one whom I admire — the moment is chosen, I am well aware of that; but I repeat e expression — one whom I admire."

A touch of amusement appeared on Miss Hazel- e's face. "Very well," said she, "come out this dreadfully cold place, and let us sit down deck." The barrister dolefully followed her.

"Now," said she, making herself comfortabl against the end of the house, "go on. I wi hear you out." And then seeing him stand befor her with so much obvious disrelish to the task, sh was suddenly overcome with laughter. Julia' laugh was a thing to ravish lovers; she rolle her mirthful descant with the freedom and th melody of a blackbird's song upon the river, an repeated by the echoes of the further bank, seemed a thing in its own place and a soun native to the open air. There was only one crea ture who heard it without joy, and that was he unfortunate admirer.

"Miss Hazeltine," he said, in a voice that to tered with annoyance, "I speak as your sincer well-wisher, but this can only be called levity."

Julia made great eyes at him.

"I can't withdraw the word," he said; "alread the freedom with which I heard you hobnobbin with a boatman gave me exquisite pain. The there was a want of reserve about Jimson ——'

"But Jimson appears to be yourself," objecte Julia.

'I am far from denying that," cried the bar-
ter, "but you did not know it at the time.
hat could Jimson be to you? Who was Jim-
n? Miss Hazeltine, it cut me to the heart."

'Really this seems to me to be very silly," re-
ned Julia, with severe decision. "You have
haved in the most extraordinary manner; you
tend you are able to explain your conduct, and
tead of doing so you begin to attack me."

"I am well aware of that," replied Gideon. "I
I will make a clean breast of it. When you
ow all the circumstances you will be able to
cuse me."

And sitting down beside her on the deck, he
ured forth his miserable history.

"Oh, Mr. Forsyth," she cried, when he had
ne. "I am — so — sorry! I wish I had n't
ghed at you — only you know you really were
exceedingly funny. But I wish I had n't, and
would n't either if I had only known." And she
ve him her hand.

Gideon kept it in his own. "You do not think
worse of me for this?" he asked, tenderly.

"Because you have been so silly and got int such dreadful trouble? you poor boy, no!" crie Julia; and in the warmth of the moment, reache him her other hand; "you may count on me, she added.

"Really?" said Gideon.

"Really and really!" replied the girl.

"I do then, and I will," cried the young ma "I admit the moment is not well chosen; but have no friends — to speak of."

"No more have I," said Julia. "But don't yo think it's perhaps time you gave me back m hands?"

"*La ci darem la mano*," said the barrister, "th merest moment more! I have so few friends," h added.

"I thought it was considered such a bad accou of a young man to have no friends," observe Julia.

"Oh, but I have crowds of *friends!*" crie Gideon. "That's not what I mean. I feel th moment is ill chosen; but oh, Julia, if you cou only see yourself!"

"Mr. Forsyth ——"

"Don't call me by that beastly name!" cried e youth. "Call me Gideon!"

"Oh, never that!" from Julia. "Besides, we ve known each other such a short time."

"Not at all!" protested Gideon. "We met at ournemouth ever so long ago. I never forgot ou since. Say you never forgot me. Say you ever forgot me, and call me Gideon!"

"Is n't this rather — a want of reserve about mson?" inquired the girl.

"Oh, I know I am an ass," cried the barrister, and I don't care a halfpenny! I know I 'm an s, and you may laugh at me to your heart's de- ght." And as Julia's lips opened with a smile, e once more dropped into music. "There 's the and of Cherry Isle!" he sang, courting her with s eyes.

"It 's like an opera," said Julia, rather faintly.

"What should it be?" said Gideon. "Am I ot Jimson? It would be strange if I did not renade my love. Oh, yes, I mean the word, my lia; and I mean to win you. I am in dreadful

trouble, and I have not a penny of my own, an
I have cut the silliest figure; and yet I mean t
win you, Julia. Look at me, if you can, and te
me no!"

She looked at him; and whatever her eyes ma
have told him, it is to be supposed he took
pleasure in the message, for he read it a lon
while.

"And Uncle Ned will give us some money to g
on upon in the meanwhile," he said, at last.

"Well, I call that cool!" said a cheerful voi
at his elbow.

Gideon and Julia sprang apart with wonderf
alacrity; the latter annoyed to observe that a
though they had never moved since they sat dow
they were now quite close together; both pr
senting faces of a very heightened colour to t
eyes of Mr. Edward Hugh Bloomfield. That ge
tleman, coming up the river in his boat, had ca
tured the truant canoe, and divining what h
happened, had thought to steal a march on Mi
Hazeltine at her sketch. He had unexpected
brought down two birds with one stone; and as

ɔked upon the pair of flushed and breathless
lprits, the pleasant human instinct of the match-
aker softened his heart.

" Well, I call that cool," he repeated; " you seem
count very securely upon Uncle Ned. But look
ere, Gid, I thought I had told you to keep away? "

" To keep away from Maidenhead," replied Gid.
But how should I expect to find you here? "

" There is something in that," Mr. Bloomfield
dmitted. " You see I thought it better that even
ɔu should be ignorant of my address; those ras-
ls, the Finsburys, would have wormed it out of
ɔu. And just to put them off the scent I hoisted
ese abominable colours. But that is not all, Gid;
ɔu promised me to work, and here I find you
laying the fool at Padwick."

" Please, Mr. Bloomfield, you must not be hard
n Mr. Forsyth," said Julia. " Poor boy, he is in
readful straits."

" What 's this, Gid? " inquired the uncle. " Have
ɔu been fighting? or is it a bill? "

These, in the opinion of the Squirradical, were
ie two misfortunes incident to gentlemen; and

indeed both were culled from his own career. H had once put his name (as a matter of form) on friend's paper; it had cost him a cool thousand and the friend had gone about with the fear o death upon him ever since, and never turned corner without scouting in front of him for Mr Bloomfield and the oaken staff. As for fighting the Squirradical was always on the brink of it and once, when (in the character of president o a radical club) he had cleared out the hall o his opponents, things had gone even further. Mr Holtum, the conservative candidate, who lay s long on the bed of sickness, was prepared to swea to Mr. Bloomfield. "I will swear to it in an court — it was the hand of that brute that struc me down," he was reported to have said; an when he was thought to be sinking, it wa known that he had made an *ante-mortem* state ment in that sense. It was a cheerful day fo the Squirradical when Holtum was restored to hi brewery.

"It 's much worse than that," said Gideon, " combination of circumstances really providentiall

just — a — in fact, a syndicate of murderers em to have perceived my latent ability to rid em of the traces of their crime. It 's a legal udy, after all, you see!" And with these words, deon, for the second time that day, began to scribe the adventures of the Broadwood Grand.

"I must write to *The Times*," cried Mr. Bloomld.

"Do you want to get me disbarred?" asked ideon.

"Disbarred! Come, it can't be as bad as that," id his uncle. "It 's a good, honest, liberal overnment that 's in, and they would certainly ove at my request. Thank God, the days of ory jobbery are at an end."

"It would n't do, Uncle Ned," said Gideon.

"But you 're not mad enough," cried Mr. oomfield, "to persist in trying to dispose of it urself?"

"There is no other path open to me," said deon.

"It 's not common-sense, and I will not hear of " cried Mr. Bloomfield. "I command you,

positively, Gid, to desist from this crimina interference."

"Very well, then, I hand it over to you," sai Gideon, "and you can do what you like with th dead body."

"God forbid!" ejaculated the president of th radical club, "I 'll have nothing to do with it."

"Then you must allow me to do the best I can, returned his nephew. "Believe me, I have distinct talent for this sort of difficulty."

"We might forward it to that pest-house, th Conservative Club," observed Mr. Bloomfield. "might damage them in the eyes of their constitu ents; and it could be profitably worked up in th local journal."

"If you see any political capital in the thing, said Gideon, "you may have it for me."

"No, no, Gid — no, no, I thought *you* might. will have no hand in the thing. On reflection, it highly undesirable that either I or Miss Hazelti should linger here. We might be observed," sa the president, looking up and down the river; "a in my public position, the consequences would

iinful for the party. And at any rate, it 's dinner me."

" What?" cried Gideon, plunging for his watch. " And so it is! Great Heaven, the piano should ıve been here hours ago!"

Mr. Bloomfield was clambering back into his ɔat; but at these words he paused.

" I saw it arrive myself at the station; I hired carrier man; he had a round to make, but he as to be here by four at the latest," cried the arrister. " No doubt the piano is open, and the ɔdy found."

" You must fly at once," cried Mr. Bloomfield, it 's the only manly step."

But suppose it 's all right?" wailed Gideon. Suppose the piano comes, and I am not here to ceive it? I shall have hanged myself by my ɔwardice. No, Uncle Ned, inquiries must be made Padwick; I dare not go, of course; but you ay, you could hang about the police office, don't ɔu see?"

" No, Gid — no, my dear nephew," said Mr. loomfield, with the voice of one on the rack. " I

regard you with the most sacred affection; and thank God I am an Englishman — and all that But not — not the police, Gid."

"Then you desert me?" said Gideon. "Say i plainly."

"Far from it! far from it!" protested Mr Bloomfield. "I only propose caution. Common sense, Gid, should always be an Englishman' guide."

"Will you let me speak?" said Julia. "I think Gideon had better leave this dreadful houseboat and wait among the willows over there. If the piano comes, then he could step out and take it in and if the police come, he could slip into our house boat, and there need n't be any more Jimson at all He could go to bed, and we could burn his clothes (could n't we?) in the steam launch; and then really it seems as if it would be all right. Mr Bloomfield is so respectable, you know, and such a leading character, it would be quite impossible even to fancy that he could be mixed up with it."

"This young lady has strong common-sense," said the Squirradical.

"Oh, I don't think I 'm at all a fool," said Julia, ïith conviction.

"But what if neither of them come?" asked ideon; "what shall I do then?"

"Why, then," said she, "you had better go own to the village after dark; and I can go with ou, and then I am sure you could never be sus-ected; and even if you were, I could tell them it as altogether a mistake."

"I will not permit that — I will not suffer Miss Iazeltine to go," cried Mr. Bloomfield.

"Why?" asked Julia.

Mr. Bloomfield had not the least desire to tell er why, for it was simply a craven fear of being rawn himself into the imbroglio; but with the sual tactics of a man who is ashamed of himself, e took the high hand. "God forbid, my dear Iiss Hazeltine, that I should dictate to a lady on ie question of propriety ——" he began.

"Oh, is that all?" interrupted Julia. "Then e must go all three."

"Caught!" thought the Squirradical.

CHAPTER XII

POSITIVELY THE LAST APPEARANCE OF THE BROADWOOD GRAND

ENGLAND is supposed to be unmusical; but without dwelling on the patronage extended to the organ-grinder, without seeking to found any argument on the prevalence of the jew's trump, there is surely one instrument that may be said to be national in the fullest acceptance of the word. The herdboy in the broom, already musical in the days of Father Chaucer, startles (and perhaps pains) the lark with this exiguous pipe; and in the hands of the skilled bricklayer,

> The thing becomes a trumpet, whence he blows

(as a general rule) either *The British Grenadiers* or *Cherry Ripe*. The latter air is indeed the shibboleth and diploma piece of the penny whistler. I hazard a guess it was originally composed for this instrument. It is singular enough that a man

ould be able to gain a livelihood, or even to tide er a period of unemployment, by the display of s proficiency upon the penny whistle; still more , that the professional should almost invariably nfine himself to *Cherry Ripe*. But indeed, singu-rities surround the subject, thick like blackberries. hy, for instance, should the pipe be called a penny histle? I think no one ever bought it for a penny. hy should the alternative name be tin whistle? am grossly deceived if it be made of tin. Lastly, what deaf catacomb, in what earless desert, does e beginner pass the excruciating interval of his prenticeship? We have all heard people learning e piano, the fiddle, and the cornet; but the young the penny whistler (like that of the salmon) is cult from observation; he is never heard until roficient; and Providence (perhaps alarmed by e works of Mr. Mallock) defends human hearing om his first attempts upon the upper octave.

A really noteworthy thing was taking place in green lane, not far from Padwick. On the bench a carrier's cart there sat a tow-headed, lanky, odest-looking youth; the reins were on his lap;

the whip lay behind him in the interior of the cart the horse proceeded without guidance or encouragement; the carrier (or the carrier's man) wrapt into a higher sphere than that of his daily occupations, his looks dwelling on the skies, devoted himself wholly to a brand new D penny whistle whence he diffidently endeavoured to elicit that pleasing melody *The Ploughboy*. To any observant person who should have chanced to saunter in that lane, the hour would have been thrilling. "Here at last," he would have said, "is the beginner."

The tow-headed youth (whose name was Harker) had just encored himself for the nineteenth time when he was struck into the extreme of confusion by the discovery that he was not alone.

"There you have it!" cried a manly voice from the side of the road. "That 's as good as I want to hear. Perhaps a leetle oilier in the run," the voice suggested, with meditative gusto. "Give it us again."

Harker glanced, from the depths of his humiliation, at the speaker. He beheld a powerful

n-brown, clean-shaven fellow, about forty years
: age, striding beside the cart with a non-commis-
»ned military bearing, and (as he strode) spin-
ng in the air a cane. The fellow's clothes were
ry bad, but he looked clean and self-reliant.

"I 'm only a beginner," gasped the blushing
arker, "I did n't think anybody could hear me."

"Well, I like that!" returned the other.
You 're a pretty old beginner. Come, I 'll give
u a lead myself. Give us a seat here beside you."

The next moment the military gentleman was
rched on the cart, pipe in hand. He gave the
strument a knowing rattle on the shaft, mouthed
appeared to commune for a moment with the
use, and dashed into *The Girl I left behind Me.*
e was a great, rather than a fine, performer;
lacked the bird-like richness; he could scarce
ve extracted all the honey out of *Cherry Ripe;*
did not fear — he even ostentatiously displayed
d seemed to revel in the shrillness of the instru-
ent; but in fire, speed, precision, evenness, and
ency; in linked agility of *jimmy* — a technical
pression, by your leave, answering to *warblers*

on the bagpipe; and perhaps, above all, in tha inspiring side-glance of the eye, with which h followed the effect and (as by a human appeal) eked out the insufficiency of his performance: i these, the fellow stood without a rival. Harke listened: *The Girl I left behind Me* filled him wit despair; *The Soldier's Joy* carried him beyon jealousy into generous enthusiasm.

"Turn about," said the military gentlema offering the pipe.

"Oh, not after you!" cried Harker; "you 'r a professional."

"No," said his companion; "an amatyure lik yourself. That 's one style of play, yours is th other, and I like it best. But I began when I wa a boy, you see, before my taste was formed. Whe you 're my age you 'll play that thing like a corne à-piston. Give us that air again; how does go?" and he affected to endeavour to recall *Th Ploughboy*.

A timid, insane hope sprang in the breast Harker. Was it possible? Was there somethin in his playing? It had, indeed, seemed to him

mes as if he got a kind of a richness out of it. Was he a genius? Meantime the military gentleman stumbled over the air.

"No," said the unhappy Harker, "that's not quite it. It goes this way — just to show you."

And, taking the pipe between his lips, he sealed his doom. When he had played the air, and then a second time, and a third; when the military gentleman had tried it once more, and once more failed; when it became clear to Harker that he, the blushing débutant, was actually giving a lesson to this full-grown flutist — and the flutist under his care was not very brilliantly progressing — how am I to tell what floods of glory brightened the autumnal country-side; how, unless the reader were an amateur himself, describe the heights of idiotic vanity to which the carrier climbed? One significant fact shall paint the situation: thenceforth it was Harker who played, and the military gentleman listened and approved.

As he listened, however, he did not forget the habit of soldierly precaution, looking both behind and before. He looked behind and computed the

value of the carrier's load, divining the contents of the brown paper parcels and the portly hamper, and briefly setting down the grand piano in the brand new piano-case as "difficult to get rid of." He looked before, and spied at the corner of the green lane a little country public-house embowered in roses. "I 'll have a shy at it," concluded the military gentleman, and roundly proposed a glass.

"Well, I 'm not a drinking man," said Harker.

"Look here, now," cut in the other, "I 'll tell you who I am: I 'm Colour-sergeant Brand of the Blankth. That 'll tell you if I 'm a drinking man or not." It might and it might not, thus a Greek chorus would have intervened, and gone on to point out how very far it fell short of telling why the sergeant was tramping a country lane in tatters; or even to argue that he must have pretermitted some while ago his labours for the general defence, and (in the interval) possibly turned his attention to oakum. But there was no Greek chorus present; and the man of war went on to contend that drinking was one thing and a friendly glass another.

In the Blue Lion, which was the name of the untry public-house, Colour-sergeant Brand in-oduced his new friend, Mr. Harker, to a number ingenious mixtures, calculated to prevent the proaches of intoxication. These he explained be "rekisite" in the service, so that a self-specting officer should always appear upon parade a condition honourable to his corps. The most ficacious of these devices was to lace a pint of ild ale with twopence worth of London gin. I n pleased to hand in this recipe to the discerning ader, who may find it useful even in civil sta-on; for its effect upon Mr. Harker was revolu-onary. He must be helped on board his own aggon, where he proceeded to display a spirit tirely given over to mirth and music, alternately ooting with laughter, to which the sergeant has-ned to bear chorus, and incoherently tootling on e pipe. The man of war, meantime, unostenta-ously possessed himself of the reins. It was ain he had a taste for the secluded beauties an English landscape; for the cart, although wandered under his guidance for some time,

was never observed to issue on the dusty highway, journeying between hedge and ditch, and for the most part under overhanging boughs. It was plain, besides, he had an eye to the true interests of Mr. Harker; for though the cart drew up more than once at the doors of public-houses, it was only the sergeant who set foot to ground, and being equipped himself with a quart bottle, once more proceeded on his rural drive.

To give any idea of the complexity of the sergeant's course, a map of that part of Middlesex would be required, and my publisher is averse from the expense. Suffice it, that a little after the night had closed, the cart was brought to a standstill in a woody road; where the sergeant lifted from among the parcels, and tenderly deposited upon the wayside, the inanimate form of Harker.

"If you come to before daylight," thought the sergeant, "I shall be surprised for one."

From the various pockets of the slumbering carrier, he gently collected the sum of seventeen

llings and eightpence sterling; and getting once
ore into the cart, drove thoughtfully away.

"If I was exactly sure of where I was, it would
a good job," he reflected. "Anyway, here's
corner."

He turned it, and found himself upon the river-
le. A little above him the lights of a house-
at shone cheerfully; and already close at hand,
close that it was impossible to avoid their notice,
ree persons, a lady and two gentlemen, were
liberately drawing near. The sergeant put his
ıst in the convenient darkness of the night, and
ove on to meet them. One of the gentlemen,
ıo was of a portly figure, walked in the midst of
e fairway and presently held up a staff by way
signal.

"My man, have you seen anything of a carrier's
rt?" he cried.

Dark as it was, it seemed to the sergeant as
ough the slimmer of the two gentlemen had made
motion to prevent the other speaking, and (find-
g himself too late) had skipped aside with some
crity. At another season, Sergeant Brand would

have paid more attention to the fact; but he wa
then immersed in the perils of his own predicamen

"A carrier's cart?" said he, with a perceptibl
uncertainty of voice, "No, sir."

"Ah!" said the portly gentleman, and stoo
aside to let the sergeant pass. The lady appeare
to bend forward and study the cart with ever
mark of sharpened curiosity; the slimmer gentl
man still keeping in the rear.

"I wonder what the devil they would be at,
thought Sergeant Brand; and looking fearfull
back, he saw the trio standing together in th
midst of the way, like folk consulting. The bra
est of military heroes are not always equal t
themselves as to their reputation; and fear, c
some singular provocation, will find a lodgme
in the most unfamiliar bosom. The word "d
tective" might have been heard to gurgle in th
sergeant's throat; and vigorously applying th
whip, he fled up the river-side road to Great Have
ham, at the gallop of the carrier's horse. Th
lights of the houseboat flashed upon the flyin
waggon as it passed; the beat of hoofs and th

ttle of the vehicle gradually coalesced and died way; and presently, to the trio on the river-side, dence had redescended.

"It 's the most extraordinary thing," cried the immer of the two gentlemen, "but that 's the art!"

"And I know I saw a piano," said the girl.

"Oh, it 's the cart, certainly; and the extraordinary thing is, it 's not the man," added the first.

"It must be the man, Gid, it must be," said the ortly one.

"Well, then, why is he running away?" asked ideon.

"His horse bolted, I suppose," said the Squiradical.

"Nonsense! I heard the whip going like a ail," said Gideon. "It simply defies the human eason."

"I 'll tell you," broke in the girl, "he came ound that corner. Suppose we went and — what o they call it in books? — followed his trail? here may be a house there, or somebody who aw him, or something."

"Well, suppose we did, for the fun of the thing," said Gideon.

The fun of the thing (it would appear) consisted in the extremely close juxtaposition of himself and Miss Hazeltine. To Uncle Ned, who was excluded from these simple pleasures, the excursion appeared hopeless from the first; and when a fresh perspective of darkness opened up, dimly contained between park palings on the one side and a hedge and ditch upon the other, the whole without the smallest signal of human habitation the Squirradical drew up.

"This is a wild-goose chase," said he.

With the cessation of the footfalls, another sound smote upon their ears.

"Oh, what 's that?" cried Julia.

"I can't think," said Gideon.

The Squirradical had his stick presented like a sword. "Gid," he began, "Gid, I ——"

"Oh, Mr. Forsyth!" cried the girl. "Oh don't go forward, you don't know what it might be — it might be something perfectly horrid."

"It may be the devil itself," said Gideon, disgaging himself, "but I am going to see it."

"Don't be rash, Gid," cried his uncle.

The barrister drew near to the sound, which was rtainly of a portentous character. In quality, it peared to blend the strains of the cow, the fog-rn, and the mosquito; and the startling manner its enunciation added incalculably to its terrors. dark object, not unlike the human form divine, peared on the brink of the ditch.

"It 's a man," said Gideon, "it 's only a man; seems to be asleep and snoring. Hullo," he ded, a moment after, "there must be something rong with him, he won't waken."

Gideon produced his vestas, struck one, and by light recognised the tow-head of Harker.

"This is the man," said he, "as drunk as Belial. see the whole story"; and to his two companions, ho had now ventured to rejoin him, he set forth theory of the divorce between the carrier and s cart, which was not unlike the truth.

"Drunken brute!" said Uncle Ned, "let 's get m to a pump and give him what he deserves."

"Not at all!" said Gideon. "It is highly un
desirable he should see us together; and really
do you know, I am very much obliged to him
for this is about the luckiest thing that could hav
possibly occurred. It seems to me — Uncle Ned
I declare to heaven it seems to me I 'm clea
of it!"

"Clear of what?" asked the Squirradical.

"The whole affair!" cried Gideon. "That ma
has been ass enough to steal the cart and the dea
body; what he hopes to do with it, I neither know
nor care. My hands are free, Jimson ceases
down with Jimson. Shake hands with me, Uncl
Ned — Julia, darling girl, Julia, I ——"

"Gideon, Gideon!" said his uncle.

"Oh, it 's all right, uncle, when we 're going t
be married so soon," said Gideon. "You know
you said so yourself in the houseboat."

"Did I?" said Uncle Ned, "I am certain I sai
no such thing."

"Appeal to him, tell him he did, get on his so
side," cried Gideon. "He 's a real brick if yo
get on his soft side."

"Dear Mr. Bloomfield," said Julia, "I know
lleon will be such a very good boy, and he has
omised me to do such a lot of law, and I will
that he does too. And you know it is so very
adying to young men, everybody admits that;
ough, of course, I know I have no money, Mr.
oomfield," she added.

"My dear young lady, as this rapscallion told
u to-day on the boat, Uncle Ned has plenty,"
id the Squirradical, "and I can never forget
at you have been shamefully defrauded. So as
ere 's nobody looking, you had better give your
cle Ned a kiss. There, you rogue," resumed
r. Bloomfield, when the ceremony had been
intily performed, "this very pretty young lady
yours, and a vast deal more than you deserve.
t now, let us get back to the houseboat, get up
am on the launch, and away back to town."

"That 's the thing!" cried Gideon; "and to-
rrow, there will be no houseboat, and no Jim-
n, and no carrier's cart, and no piano; and when
arker awakes on the ditch side, he may tell him-
f the whole affair has been a dream."

"Aha!" said Uncle Ned, "but there 's another man who will have a different awakening. That fellow in the cart will find he has been too clever by half."

"Uncle Ned and Julia," said Gideon, "I am as happy as the King of Tartary, my heart is like a threepenny bit, my heels are like feathers; I am out of all my troubles, Julia's hand is in mine. Is this a time for anything but handsome sentiments? Why, there 's not room in me for anything that 's not angelic! And when I think of that poor unhappy devil in the cart, I stand here in the night and cry with a single heart — God help him!"

"Amen," said Uncle Ned.

CHAPTER XIII

HE TRIBULATIONS OF MORRIS: PART THE SECOND

[N a really polite age of literature, I would have scorned to cast my eye again on the contortions of Morris. But the study is in e spirit of the day; it presents, besides, features a high, almost a repulsive morality; and if it ould prove the means of preventing any respect-le and inexperienced gentleman from plunging ght-heartedly into crime, even political crime, is work will not have been penned in vain.

He rose on the morrow of his night with ichael, rose from the leaden slumber of distress, find his hand tremulous, his eyes closed with eum, his throat parched, and his digestion ob-ously paralysed. "Lord knows it 's not from ting!" Morris thought; and as he dressed he considered his position under several heads.

Nothing will so well depict the troubled seas in which he was now voyaging as a review of these various anxieties. I have thrown them (for the reader's convenience) into a certain order; but in the mind of one poor human equal, they whirled together like the dust of hurricanes. With the same obliging preoccupation, I have put a name to each of his distresses; and it will be observed with pity that every individual item would have graced and commended the cover of a railway novel.

Anxiety the First: *Where is the Body? or, the Mystery of Bent Pitman.* It was now manifestly plain that Bent Pitman (as was to be looked for from his ominous appellation) belonged to the darker order of the criminal class. An honest man would not have cashed the bill; a humane man would not have accepted in silence the tragic contents of the water-butt; a man, who was not already up to the hilts in gore, would have lacked the means of secretly disposing them. This process of reasoning left a horrid image of the monster, Pitman. Doubtless he had long ago disposed of the body — dropping it through a trap-door in his

:k kitchen, Morris supposed, with some hazy ollection of a picture in a penny dreadful; and ubtless the man now lived in wanton splendour the proceeds of the bill. So far, all was peace. t with the profligate habits of a man like Bent man (who was no doubt a hunchback in the gain), eight hundred pounds could be easily lted in a week. When they were gone, what uld he be likely to do next? A hell-like voice Morris's own bosom gave the answer: "Black-il me."

Anxiety the Second: *The Fraud of the Tontine; Is my Uncle Dead?* This, on which all Morris's pes depended, was yet a question. He had tried bully Teena; he had tried to bribe her; and thing came of it. He had his moral conviction ll; but you cannot blackmail a sharp lawyer on moral conviction. And besides, since his inter-w with Michael, the idea wore a less attractive untenance. Was Michael the man to be black-iled? and was Morris the man to do it? Grave nsiderations. "It 's not that I am afraid of n," Morris so far condescended to reassure him-

self; "but I must be very certain of my ground and the deuce of it is, I see no way. How unlik is life to novels! I would n't have even begu this business in a novel, but what I 'd have met dark, slouching fellow in the Oxford Road, who ' have become my accomplice, and known all abou how to do it, and probably broken into Michael' house at night and found nothing but a wax-wor image; and then blackmailed or murdered m But here, in real life, I might walk the streets ti I dropped dead, and none of the criminal classe would look near me. Though, to be sure, ther is always Pitman," he added, thoughtfully.

Anxiety the Third: *The Cottage at Browndea or, The Underpaid Accomplice.* For he had a accomplice, and that accomplice was blooming u seen in a damp cottage in Hampshire with empt pockets. What could be done about that? H really ought to have sent him something; if it wa only a post-office order for five-bob, enough prove that he was kept in mind, enough to ke him in hope, beer, and tobacco. "But what wou you have?" thought Morris; and ruefully pour

o his hand a half-crown, a florin, and eight-
nce in small change. For a man in Morris's
sition, at war with all society, and conducting,
th the hand of inexperience, a widely ramified
rigue, the sum was already a derision. John
ould have to be doing; no mistake of that.
But then," asked the hell-like voice, "how long
John likely to stand it?"

Anxiety the Fourth: *The Leather Business; or, he Shutters at Last; a Tale of the City.* On this ad, Morris had no news. He had not yet dared visit the family concern; yet he knew he must lay no longer, and if anything had been wanted sharpen this conviction, Michael's references the night before rang ambiguously in his ear. Vell and good. To visit the city might be indis-ensable; but what was he to do when he was ere? He had no right to sign in his own name; nd with all the will in the world, he seemed to ck the art of signing with his uncle's. Under ese circumstances, Morris could do nothing to rocrastinate the crash; and when it came, when ying eyes began to be applied to every joint

of his behaviour, two questions could not fail t be addressed, sooner or later, to a speechless an perspiring insolvent. Where is Mr. Joseph Fins bury? and how about your visit to the bank Questions, how easy to put! — ye gods, how im possible to answer! The man to whom they shoul be addressed went certainly to gaol, and — eh what was this? — possibly to the gallows. Morri was trying to shave when this idea struck him and he laid the razor down. Here (in Michael' words) was the total disappearance of a valuabl uncle; here was a time of inexplicable conduc on the part of a nephew who had been in bad bloo with the old man any time these seven years what a chance for a judicial blunder! "But no, thought Morris, "they cannot, they dare not mak it murder. Not that. But honestly, and speak ing as a man to a man, I don't see any other crim in the calendar (except arson) that I don't see somehow to have committed. And yet I 'm a pe fectly respectable man, and wished nothing bu my due. Law is a pretty business."

With this conclusion firmly seated in his mind

orris Finsbury descended to the hall of the house John Street, still half shaven. There was a tter in the box; he knew the handwriting: John last.

"Well, I think I might have been spared this," said bitterly, and tore it open.

"Dear Morris," it ran, "what the dickens do you mean by I 'm in an awful hole down here; I have to go on tick, d the parties on the spot don't cotton to the idea; they uld n't, because it is so plain I 'm in a stait of Destitution. ve got no bed-clothes, think of that, I must have coins, the le thing 's a Mockry, I won't stand it, nobody would. I ould have come away before, only I have no money for the ilway fair. Don't be a lunatic, Morris, you don't seem to derstand my dredful situation. I have to get the stamp on k. A fact. Ever your affte. Brother, J. Finsbury."

"Can't even spell!" Morris reflected, as he ammed the letter in his pocket, and left the ouse. "What can I do for him? I have to go the expense of a barber, I 'm so shattered! ow can I send anybody coins? It 's hard lines, dare say; but does he think I 'm living on hot uffins? One comfort," was his grim reflection, he can't cut and run: he 's got to stay, he 's as elpless as the dead." And then he broke forth

again: "Complains, does he? and he 's never eve heard of Bent Pitman! If he had what I have o my mind, he might complain with a good grace."

But these were not honest arguments, or no wholly honest; there was a struggle in the min of Morris; he could not disguise from himsel that his brother John was miserably situated a Browndean, without news, without money, with out bed-clothes, without society or any entertain ment; and by the time he had been shaved an picked a hasty breakfast at a coffee-tavern, Morri had arrived at a compromise.

"Poor Johnny," he said to himself, "he 's i an awful box. I can't send him coins; but I ' tell you what I 'll do, I 'll send him the *Pink U* it 'll cheer John up; and besides, it 'll do his cred good getting anything by post."

Accordingly, on his way to the leather busines whither he proceeded (according to his thrift habit) on foot, Morris purchased and despatche a single copy of that enlivening periodical, t which (in a sudden pang of remorse) he adde at random the *Athenæum*, the *Revivalist*, and th

nny Pictorial Weekly. So there was John set with literature, and Morris had laid balm upon s conscience.

As if to reward him, he was received in his ace of business with good news. Orders were ouring in; there was a run on some of the back ock, and the figure had gone up; even the man-ger appeared elated. As for Morris, who had most forgotten the meaning of good news, he nged to sob like a little child; he could have aught the manager (a pallid man with startled ebrows) to his bosom; he could have found it in is generosity to give a cheque (for a small sum) every clerk in the counting-house. As he sat nd opened his letters, a chorus of airy vocalists ng in his brain, to most exquisite music, "This d concern may be profitable yet, profitable yet, rofitable yet."

To him, in this sunny moment of relief, enter Mr. Rodgerson, a creditor, but not one who was xpected to be pressing, for his connection with e firm was old and regular.

"Oh, Finsbury," said he, not without embar-

rassment, "it 's of course only fair to let yo know — the fact is, money is a trifle tight — have some paper out — for that matter, every one complaining — and in short ——"

"It has never been our habit, Rodgerson," sai Morris, turning pale. "But give me time to tur round, and I 'll see what I can do; I dare say w can let you have something on account."

"Well, that 's just where it is," replied Rodge son. "I was tempted, I 've let the credit out o my hands."

"Out of your hands?" repeated Morri "That 's playing rather fast and loose with u Mr. Rodgerson."

"Well, I got cent for cent for it," said the othe "on the nail, in a certified cheque."

"Cent for cent!" cried Morris. "Why, that something like thirty per cent bonus; a singula thing! Who 's the party?"

"Don't know the man," was the reply. "Nam of Moss."

"A Jew," Morris reflected, when his visitor wa gone. And what could a Jew want with a clai

— he verified the amount in the books — a claim three five eight, nineteen, ten, against the house Finsbury? And why should he pay cent for ent? The figure proved the loyalty of Rodgerson, ven Morris admitted that. But it proved unfor-nately something else: the eagerness of Moss. he claim must have been wanted instantly, for nat day, for that morning even. Why? The nystery of Moss promised to be a fit pendant to ne mystery of Pitman. "And just when all was ooking well, too!" cried Morris, smiting his hand pon the desk. And almost at the same moment, Mr. Moss was announced.

Mr. Moss was a radiant Hebrew, brutally hand-ome and offensively polite. He was acting (it ppeared) for a third party; he understood noth-ng of the circumstances; his client desired to have is position regularised; but he would accept an ntedated cheque — antedated by two months, if Mr. Finsbury chose.

"But I don't understand this," said Morris. What made you pay cent per cent for it to-day?"

Mr. Moss had no idea; only his orders.

"The whole thing is thoroughly irregular," sai
Morris. "It is not the custom of the trade t
settle at this time of the year. What are you
instructions if I refuse?"

"I am to see Mr. Joseph Finsbury, the head o
the firm," said Mr. Moss. "I was directed t
insist on that; it was implied you had no statu
here — the expressions are not mine."

"You cannot see Mr. Joseph; he is unwell,
said Morris.

"In that case I was to place the matter in th
hands of a lawyer — let me see — " said M
Moss, opening a pocket-book, with perhaps su
picious care, at the right place — "Yes — of M
Michael Finsbury. A relation, perhaps? In th
case, I presume, the matter will be pleasant
arranged."

To pass into the hands of Michael was too mu
for Morris; he struck his colours: a cheque
two months was nothing, after all. In two monti
he would probably be dead, or in a gaol at a
rate. He bade the manager give Mr. Moss a cha
and the paper. "I 'm going over to get a cheq

ned by Mr. Finsbury," said he, "who is lying at John Street."

A cab there and a cab back, here were inroads his wretched capital! He counted the cost; nen he was done with Mr. Moss, he would be ft with twelvepence halfpenny in the world. 'hat was even worse, he had now been forced to ing his uncle up to Bloomsbury. "No use for oor Johnny in Hampshire now," he reflected. And how the farce is to be kept up completely asses me. At Browndean it was just possible; Bloomsbury it seems beyond human ingenuity - though I suppose it 's what Michael does. But en he has accomplices, that Scotchman and the hole gang. Ah, if I had accomplices!"

Necessity is the mother of the arts; under a our so immediate Morris surprised himself by the eatness and despatch of his new forgery; and ithin three-fourths of an hour had handed it to Ir. Moss.

"That is very satisfactory," observed that gen- eman, rising. "I was to tell you it will not be resented, but you had better take care."

The room swam round Morris. "What — what 's that!" he cried, grasping the table; h was miserably conscious, the next moment, of hi shrill tongue and ashen face. "What do yo mean — it will not be presented? Why am I t take care? What is all this mummery?"

"I have no idea, Mr. Finsbury," replied th smiling Hebrew. "It was a message I was t deliver; the expressions were put into my mouth.

"What is your client's name?" asked Morris.

"That is a secret for the moment," answere Mr. Moss.

Morris bent toward him. "It 's not the bank? he asked, hoarsely.

"I have no authority to say more, Mr. Fins bury," returned Mr. Moss. "I will wish you good-morning, if you please."

"Wish me a good-morning!" thought Morris and the next moment, seizing his hat, he fled fro his place of business like a madman. Three stree away he stopped and groaned. "Lord! I shoul have borrowed from the manager!" he crie "But it 's too late now; it would look dicky

back; I 'm penniless — simply penniless — like unemployed."

He went home and sat in the dismantled dining-om with his head in his hands. Newton never ought harder than this victim of circumstance, d yet no clearness came. "It may be a defect my intelligence," he cried, rising to his feet, ut I cannot see that I am fairly used. The bad ck I 've had is a thing to write to *The Times* out; it 's enough to breed a revolution. And e plain English of the whole thing is that I ust have money at once. I 'm done with all orality now; I 'm long past that stage; money must have, and the only chance I see is Bent tman. Bent Pitman is a criminal, and therefore s position 's weak. He must have some of that ght hundred left; if he has I 'll force him to go ares; and even if he has n't, I 'll tell him the ntine affair, and with a desperate man like tman at my back, it 'll be strange if I don't cceed.

Well and good. But how to lay hands upon nt Pitman, except by advertisement, was not so

clear. And even so, in what terms to ask a meeting? on what grounds? and where? Not at John Street, for it would never do to let a man like Bent Pitman know your real address; nor yet at Pitman's house, some dreadful place in Holloway with a trap-door in the back kitchen; a house which you might enter in a light summer overcoat and varnished boots, to come forth again piecemeal in a market-basket. That was the drawback of a really efficient accomplice, Morris felt, not without a shudder. "I never dreamed I should come to actually covet such society," he thought. And then a brilliant idea struck him. Waterloo Station, a public place, yet at certain hours of the day a solitary; a place, besides, the very name of which must knock upon the heart of Pitman, and at once suggest a knowledge of the latest of his guilty secrets. Morris took a piece of paper and sketched his advertisement.

"WILLIAM BENT PITMAN, if this should meet the eye of he will hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE at the far end of the main line departure platform, Waterloo Station, 2 to P. M., Sunday next."

Morris reperused this literary trifle with appro-
ion. "Terse," he reflected. "Something to
advantage is not strictly true; but it 's taking
H original, and a man is not on oath in an ad-
tisement. All that I require now is the ready
sh for my own meals and for the advertisement,
d — no, I can't lavish money upon John, but
ll give him some more papers. How to raise
e wind?"

He approached his cabinet of signets, and the
llector suddenly revolted in his blood. "I will
t!" he cried, "nothing shall induce me to mas-
cre my collection — rather theft!" And dash-
g up-stairs to the drawing-room, he helped himself
a few of his uncle's curiosities: a pair of
urkish babooshes, a Smyrna fan, a water-cooler,
musket guaranteed to have been seized from an
phesian bandit, and a pocketful of curious but
complete sea-shells.

CHAPTER XIV

WILLIAM BENT PITMAN HEARS OF SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE

ON the morning of Sunday, William Den Pitman rose at his usual hour, although with something more than the usual reluctance. The day before (it should be explained an addition had been made to his family in the person of a lodger. Michael Finsbury had acted sponsor in the business, and guaranteed the weekly bill; on the other hand, no doubt with a spice of his prevailing jocularity, he had drawn a depressing portrait of the lodger's character. Mr. Pitman had been led to understand his guest was not good company; he had approached the gentleman with fear, and had rejoiced to find himself the entertainer of an angel. At tea he had been vastly pleased; till hard on one in the morning he had sat entranced by eloquence and progressively fortified with information in the studio; and now

he reviewed over his toilette the harmless pleas-
es of the evening, the future smiled upon him
th revived attractions. "Mr. Finsbury is, in-
ed, an acquisition," he remarked to himself;
d as he entered the little parlour, where the
ble was already laid for breakfast, the cordiality
his greeting would have befitted an acquaint-
ceship already old.

"I am delighted to see you, sir" — these were
s expressions — "and I trust you have slept
ell."

"Accustomed as I have been for so long to a
e of almost perpetual change," replied the guest,
he disturbance so often complained of by the
ore sedentary, as attending their first night in
what is called) a new bed is a complaint from
hich I am entirely free."

"I am delighted to hear it," said the drawing-
aster warmly. "But I see I have interrupted
u over the paper."

"The Sunday paper is one of the features of the
e," said Mr. Finsbury. "In America, I am told,
supersedes all other literature, the bone and

sinew of the nation finding their requirement catered for; hundreds of columns will be occupie with interesting details of the world's doings, suc as water-spouts, elopements, conflagrations, an public entertainments; there is a corner for poli tics, ladies' work, chess, religion, and even litera ture; and a few spicy editorials serve to direct th course of public thought. It is difficult to estimat the part played by such enormous and misce laneous repositories in the education of the peopl But this (though interesting in itself) partakes o the nature of a digression; and what I was abou to ask you was this: Are you yourself a studen of the daily press?"

"There is not much in the papers to interes an artist," returned Pitman.

"In that case," resumed Joseph, "an advertis ment which has appeared the last two days i various journals, and reappears this morning, ma possibly have failed to catch your eye. The nam with a trifling variation, bears a strong resem blance to your own. Ah, here it is. If you pleas I will read it to you.

"WILLIAM BENT PITMAN, if this should meet the eye of, will hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE at the far end the main line departure platform, Waterloo Station, 2 to 4 . to-day.'"

"Is that in print?" cried Pitman. "Let me see Bent? It must be Dent! *Something to my vantage?* Mr. Finsbury, excuse me offering a rd of caution; I am aware how strangely this ist sound in your ears, but there are domestic asons why this little circumstance might perhaps better kept between ourselves. Mrs. Pitman — dear sir, I assure you there is nothing dis-nourable in my secrecy; the reasons are do-stic, merely domestic; and I may set your nscience at rest when I assure you all the cir-mstances are known to our common friend, your cellent nephew, Mr. Michael, who has not with-awn from me his esteem."

"A word is enough, Mr. Pitman," said Joseph, th one of his oriental reverences.

Half an hour later, the drawing-master found chael in bed and reading a book, the picture of od-humour and repose.

"Hillo, Pitman," he said, laying down his book "what brings you here at this inclement hour Ought to be in church, my boy!"

"I have little thought of church to-day, Mr Finsbury," said the drawing-master. "I am on the brink of something new, sir." And he presented the advertisement.

"Why, what is this?" cried Michael, sitting suddenly up. He studied it for half a minute with a frown. "Pitman, I don't care about this document a particle," said he.

"It will have to be attended to, however," said Pitman.

"I thought you'd had enough of Waterloo," returned the lawyer. "Have you started a morbid craving? You've never been yourself anywhere since you lost that beard. I believe now it was where you kept your senses."

"Mr. Finsbury," said the drawing-master, "I have tried to reason this matter out, and, with your permission, I should like to lay before you the results."

"Fire away," said Michael; "but please, Pi

n, remember it 's Sunday, and let 's have no bad guage."

There are three views open to us," began Pitn. "First, this may be connected with the rel; second, it may be connected with Mr. Semiolis' statue; and third, it may be from my e's brother, who went to Australia. In the first e, which is of course possible, I confess the tter would be best allowed to drop."

'The court is with you there, Brother Pitman," d Michael.

'In the second," continued the other, "it is inly my duty to leave no stone unturned for the overy of the lost antique."

'My dear fellow, Semitopolis has come down e a trump; he has pocketed the loss and left the profit. What more would you have?" inred the lawyer.

'I conceive, sir, under correction, that Mr. nitopolis' generosity binds me to even greater rtion," said the drawing-master. "The whole iness was unfortunate; it was — I need not guise it from you — it was illegal from the first:

the more reason that I should try to behave like a gentleman," concluded Pitman, flushing.

"I have nothing to say to that," returned the lawyer. "I have sometimes thought I should like to try to behave like a gentleman myself; only it 's such a one-sided business, with the world and the legal profession as they are."

"Then, in the third," resumed the drawing-master, "if it 's Uncle Tim, of course, our fortune 's made."

"It 's not Uncle Tim, though," said the lawyer.

"Have you observed that very remarkable expression: *Something to his advantage?*" inquired Pitman, shrewdly.

"You innocent mutton," said Michael, "it 's the seediest commonplace in the English language, and only proves the advertiser is an ass. Let me demolish your house of cards for you at once. Would Uncle Tim make that blunder in your name? — in itself, the blunder is delicious, a huge improvement on the gross reality, and I mean to adopt it in the future; but is it like Uncle Tim?"

"No, it 's not like him," Pitman admitted. "But mind may have become unhinged at Ballarat."

"If you come to that, Pitman," said Michael, he advertiser *may* be Queen Victoria, fired with e desire to make a duke of you. I put it to urself if that 's probable; and yet it 's not ainst the laws of nature. But we sit here to nsider probabilities; and with your genteel per-ission, I eliminate her Majesty and Uncle Tim the threshold. To proceed, we have your sec-d idea, that this has some connection with the atue. Possible; but in that case who is the vertiser? Not Ricardi, for he knows your ad-ess; not the person who got the box, for he es n't know your name. The van-man, I hear u suggest, in a lucid interval. He might have t your name, and got it incorrectly, at the sta-n; and he might have failed to get your dress. I grant the van-man. But a question: o you really wish to meet the van-man?"

"Why should I not?" asked Pitman.

"If he wants to meet you," replied Michael, observe this: It is because he has found his

address-book, has been to the house that got the statue, and — mark my words! — is moving at the instigation of the murderer."

"I should be very sorry to think so," said Pitman; "but I still consider it my duty to Mr Semitopolis . . ."

"Pitman," interrupted Michael, "this will not do. Don't seek to impose on your legal adviser; don't try to pass yourself off for the Duke of Wellington, for that is not your line. Come, I wager a dinner I can read your thoughts. You still believe it 's Uncle Tim."

"Mr. Finsbury," said the drawing-master, colouring, "you are not a man in narrow circumstances, and you have no family. Guendolen is growing up, a very promising girl — she was confirmed this year; and I think you will be able to enter into my feelings as a parent, when I tell you she is quite ignorant of dancing. The boys are at the board-school, which is all very well in its way; at least, I am the last man in the world to criticise the institutions of my native land. But I had fondly hoped that Harold

ght become a professional musician; and little
no shows a quite remarkable vocation for
Church. I am not exactly an ambitious
n . . ."

"Well, well," interrupted Michael. "Be ex-
cit; you think it 's Uncle Tim."

"It might be Uncle Tim," insisted Pitman,
nd if it were, and I neglected the occasion, how
uld I ever look my children in the face? I do
t refer to Mrs. Pitman . . ."

"No, you never do," said Michael.

". . . but in the case of her own brother return-
g from Ballarat . . ." continued Pitman.

". . . with his mind unhinged," put in the
wyer.

". . . returning from Ballarat with a large for-
ne, her impatience may be more easily imagined
an described," concluded Pitman.

"All right," said Michael, "be it so. And what
you propose to do?"

"I am going to Waterloo," said Pitman, "in
guise."

"All by your little self?" inquired the lawyer.

"Well, I hope you think it safe. Mind and se me word from the police cells."

"Oh, Mr. Finsbury, I had ventured to hope perhaps you might be induced to — to make o of us," faltered Pitman.

"Disguise myself on Sunday?" cried Micha "How little you understand my principles!"

"Mr. Finsbury, I have no means of showi you my gratitude; but let me ask you one que tion," said Pitman. "If I were a very rich clie would you not take the risk?"

"Diamond, Diamond, you know not what y do!" cried Michael. "Why, man, do you suppo I make a practice of cutting about London wi my clients in disguise? Do you suppose mon would induce me to touch this business with stick? I give you my word of honour, it wou not. But I own I have a real curiosity to see h you conduct this interview — that tempts me; tempts me, Pitman, more than gold — it should exquisitely rich." And suddenly Michael laughe "Well, Pitman," said he, "have all the truck rea in the studio. I'll go."

About twenty minutes after two, on this event-
day, the vast and gloomy shed of Waterloo
, like the temple of a dead religion, silent and
serted. Here and there, at one of the platforms,
train lay becalmed; here and there a wandering
otfall echoed; the cab-horses outside stamped
ith startling reverberations on the stones: or
om the neighbouring wilderness of railway an
gine snorted forth a whistle. The main line
eparture platform slumbered like the rest; the
ooking-hutches closed; the backs of Mr. Hag-
ard's novels, with which upon a week-day the
ook-stall shines emblazoned, discreetly hidden be-
ind dingy shutters; the rare officials, undisguisedly
somnambulant; and the customary loiterers, even
to the middle-aged woman with the ulster and the
handbag, fled to more congenial scenes. As in the
inmost dells of some small tropic island the throb-
bing of the ocean lingers, so here a faint pervading
hum and trepidation told in every corner of sur-
rounding London.

At the hour already named, persons acquainted
with John Dickson, of Ballarat, and Ezra Thomas,

of the United States of America, would have been cheered to behold them enter through the booking-office.

"What names are we to take?" inquired the latter, anxiously adjusting the window-glass spectacles which he had been suffered on this occasion to assume.

"There 's no choice for you, my boy," returned Michael. "Bent Pitman or nothing. As for me, I think I look as if I might be called Appleby; something agreeably old-world about Appleby — breathes of Devonshire cider. Talking of which, suppose you wet your whistle? the interview is likely to be trying."

"I think I 'll wait till afterward," returned Pitman, "on the whole, I think I 'll wait till the thing 's over. I don't know if it strikes you as it does me; but the place seems deserted and silent, Mr. Finsbury, and filled with very singular echoes."

"Kind of Jack-in-the-box feeling?" inquired Michael, "as if all these empty trains might be filled with policemen waiting for a signal? and

Sir Charles Warren perched among the girders with a silver whistle to his lips? It 's guilt, Pitman."

In this uneasy frame of mind they walked nearly the whole length of the departure platform, and at the western extremity became aware of a slender figure standing backed against a pillar. The figure was plainly sunk into a deep abstraction; he was not aware of their approach, but gazed far abroad over the sunlit station. Michael stopped.

"Holloa!" said he, "can that be your advertiser? If so, I 'm done with it." And then, on second thoughts: "Not so, either," he resumed, more cheerfully. "Here, turn your back a moment. So. Give me the specs."

"But you agreed I was to have them," protested Pitman.

"Ah, but that man knows me," said Michael.

"Does he? what 's his name?" cried Pitman.

"Oh, he took me into his confidence," returned the lawyer. "But I may say one thing: If he 's your advertiser (and he may be, for he seems to have been seized with criminal lunacy) you can

go ahead with a clear conscience, for I hold him in the hollow of my hand."

The change effected, and Pitman comforted with this good news, the pair drew near to Morris.

"Are you looking for Mr. William Bent Pitman?" inquired the drawing-master. "I am he."

Morris raised his head. He saw before him, in the speaker, a person of almost indescribable insignificance, in white spats and a shirt cut indecently low. A little behind a second and more burly figure offered little to criticism, except ulster, whiskers, spectacles, and deer-stalker hat. Since he had decided to call up devils from the underworld of London, Morris had pondered deeply on the probabilities of their appearance. His first emotion, like that of Charoba when she beheld the sea, was one of disappointment; his second did more justice to the case. Never before had he seen a couple dressed like these; he had struck a new stratum.

"I must speak with you alone," said he.

"You need not mind Mr. Appleby," returned Pitman. "He knows all."

"All? Do you know what I am here to speak ff?" inquired Morris. "The barrel."

Pitman turned pale, but it was with manly in- ignation. "You are the man!" he cried. "You ery wicked person!"

"Am I to speak before him?" asked Morris, disregarding these severe expressions.

"He has been present throughout," said Pitman. "He opened the barrel; your guilty secret is al- eady known to him, as well as to your Maker nd myself."

"Well, then," said Morris, "what have you lone with the money?"

"I know nothing about any money," said Pitman.

"You need n't try that on," said Morris. "I ave tracked you down; you came to the station acrilegiously disguised as a clergyman, procured ny barrel, opened it, rifled the body, and cashed he bill. I have been to the bank, I tell you! I ave followed you step by step, and your denials re childish and absurd."

"Come, come, Morris, keep your temper," said Mr. Appleby.

"Michael!" cried Morris, "Michael here too!"

"Here too," echoed the lawyer, "here and everywhere, my good fellow; every step you take is counted; trained detectives follow you like your shadow; they report to me every three-quarters of an hour; no expense is spared."

Morris's face took on a hue of dirty grey. "Well, I don't care; I have the less reserve to keep," he cried. "That man cashed my bill; it's a theft, and I want the money back."

"Do you think I would lie to you, Morris?" asked Michael.

"I don't know," said his cousin. "I want my money."

"It was I alone who touched the body," began Michael.

"You? Michael!" cried Morris, starting back. "Then why have n't you declared the death?"

"What the devil do you mean?" asked Michael.

"Am I mad? or are you?" cried Morris.

"I think it must be Pitman," said Michael.

The three men stared at each other, wild-eyed.

"This is dreadful," said Morris, "dreadful

do not understand one word that is addressed to e."

"I give you my word of honour, no more do I," id Michael.

"And in God's name, why whiskers?" cried Iorris, pointing in a ghastly manner at his cousin. Does my brain reel? How whiskers?"

"Oh, that 's a matter of detail," said Michael. There was another silence, during which Morris ppeared to himself to be shot in a trapeze as high s St. Paul's, and as low as Baker Street Station.

"Let us recapitulate," said Michael, "unless 's really a dream, in which case I wish Teena ould call me for breakfast. My friend Pitman, ere, received a barrel which, it now appears, was eant for you. The barrel contained the body of man. How or why you killed him . . ."

"I never laid a hand on him," protested Morris. This is what I have dreaded all along. But ink, Michael! I 'm not that kind of man; with ll my faults, I would n't touch a hair of anybody's head, and it was all dead loss to me. He ot killed in that vile accident."

Suddenly Michael was seized by mirth so prolonged and excessive that his companions supposed beyond a doubt his reason had deserted him. Again and again he struggled to compose himself, and again and again laughter overwhelmed him like a tide. In all this maddening interview there had been no more spectral feature than this of Michael's merriment; and Pitman and Morris, drawn together by the common fear, exchanged glances of anxiety.

"Morris," gasped the lawyer, when he was at last able to articulate, "hold on, I see it all now. I can make it all clear in one word. Here's the key: *I never guessed it was Uncle Joseph till this moment.*"

This remark produced an instant lightening of the tension for Morris; for Pitman, it quenched the last ray of hope and daylight. Uncle Joseph, whom he had left an hour ago in Norfolk Street, pasting newspaper cuttings? — it? — the dead body? — then who was he, Pitman? and was this Waterloo Station or Colney Hatch?

"To be sure!" cried Morris; "it was badly

mashed, I know. How stupid not to think of that. Why, then, all 's clear; and, my dear Michael, 'll tell you what — we 're saved, both saved. ou get the tontine — I don't grudge it you the ast — and I get the leather business, which is eally beginning to look up. Declare the death once, don't mind me in the smallest, don't nsider me; declare the death, and we 're all ght."

"Ah, but I can't declare it," said Michael.

"Why not?" cried Morris.

"I can't produce the corpus, Morris. I 've lost ," said the lawyer.

"Stop a bit," ejaculated the leather merchant. How is this? It 's not possible. I lost it."

"Well, I 've lost it too, my son," said Michael, ith extreme serenity. "Not recognising it, you e, and suspecting something irregular in its igin, I got rid of — what shall we say? — got d of the proceeds at once."

"You got rid of the body? What made you do at?" wailed Morris. "But you can get it again? ou know where it is?"

"I wish I did, Morris, and you may believe me there, for it would be a small sum in my pocket; but the fact is, I don't," said Michael.

"Good Lord," said Morris, addressing heaven and earth, "good Lord, I've lost the leather business."

Michael was once more shaken with laughter.

"Why do you laugh, you fool?" cried his cousin, "you lose more than I. You've bungled it worse than even I did. If you had a spark of feeling, you would be shaking in your boots with vexation. But I'll tell you one thing — I'll have that eight hundred pound — I'll have that and go to Swan River — that's mine, anyway, and your friend must have forged to cash it. Give me the eight hundred, here, upon this platform, or I go straight to Scotland Yard and turn the whole disreputable story inside out."

"Morris," said Michael, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "hear reason. It wasn't us, it was the other man. We never even searched the body."

"The other man?" repeated Morris.

"Yes, the other man. We palmed Uncle Joseph off upon another man," said Michael.

"You what? You palmed him off? That 's surely a singular expression," said Morris.

"Yes, palmed him off for a piano," said Michael, with perfect simplicity. "Remarkably full, rich tone," he added.

Morris carried his hand to his brow and looked at it; it was wet with sweat. "Fever," said he.

"No, it was a Broadwood grand," said Michael. 'Pitman here will tell you if it was genuine or not."

"Eh? Oh! Oh, yes, I believe it was a genuine Broadwood; I have played upon it several times myself," said Pitman. "The three-letter E was broken."

"Don't say anything more about pianos," said Morris, with a strong shudder; "I 'm not the man I used to be! This — this other man — let 's come to him, if I can only manage to follow. Who is he? Where can I get hold of him?"

"Ah, that 's the rub," said Michael. "He 's been in possession of the desired article, let me see

— since Wednesday, about four o'clock, and i now, I should imagine, on his way to the isles o Javan and Godire."

"Michael," said Morris, pleadingly, "I am i a very weak state, and I beg your consideratio for a kinsman. Say it slowly again, and be sur you are correct. When did he get it?"

Michael repeated his statement.

"Yes, that 's the worst thing yet," said Morris drawing in his breath.

"What is?" asked the lawyer.

"Even the dates are sheer nonsense," said th leather merchant. "The bill was cashed on Tues day. There 's not a gleam of reason in the whol transaction."

A young gentleman, who had passed the tri and suddenly started and turned back, at this mo ment laid a heavy hand on Michael's shoulder.

"Aha, so this is Mr. Dickson?" said he.

The trump of judgment could scarce have run with a more dreadful note in the ears of Pitma and the lawyer. To Morris this erroneous nam seemed a legitimate enough continuation of th

ightmare in which he had so long been wander-
g. And when Michael, with his brand-new bushy
hiskers, broke from the grasp of the stranger
nd turned to run, and the weird little shaven
reature in the low-necked shirt followed his ex-
mple with a bird-like screech, and the stranger
finding the rest of his prey escape him) pounced
ith a rude grasp on Morris himself, that gentle-
nan's frame of mind might be very nearly ex-
ressed in the colloquial phrase: "I told you
o!"

"I have one of the gang," said Gideon Forsyth.

"I do not understand," said Morris, dully.

"Oh, I will make you understand," returned
Gideon, grimly.

"You will be a good friend to me if you can
nake me understand anything," cried Morris, with
sudden energy of conviction.

"I don't know you personally, do I?" con-
inued Gideon, examining his unresisting prisoner.
Never mind, I know your friends. They are your
riends, are they not?"

"I do not understand you," said Morris.

"You had possibly something to do with a piano?" suggested Gideon.

"A piano!" cried Morris, convulsively clasping Gideon by the arm. "Then you 're the other man! Where is it? Where is the body? And did you cash the draft?"

"Where is the body? This is very strange," mused Gideon. "Do you want the body?"

"Want it?" cried Morris. "My whole fortune depends upon it! I lost it. Where is it? Take me to it!"

"Oh, you want it, do you? And the other man Dickson — does he want it?" inquired Gideon.

"Who do you mean by Dickson? Oh, Michael Finsbury! Why, of course he does! He lost it too. If he had it he 'd have won the tontine to-morrow."

"Michael Finsbury! Not the solicitor?" cried Gideon.

"Yes, the solicitor," said Morris. "But where is the body?"

"Then that is why he sent the brief! What is Mr. Finsbury's private address?" asked Gideon.

"233 King's Road. What brief? Where are ou going? Where is the body?" cried Morris, linging to Gideon's arm.

"I have lost it myself," returned Gideon, and an out of the station.

CHAPTER XV

THE RETURN OF THE GREAT VANCE

MORRIS returned from Waterloo in a frame of mind that baffles description. He was a modest man; he had never conceived an overweening notion of his own powers; he knew himself unfit to write a book, turn a table napkin-ring, entertain a Christmas party with legerdemain — grapple (in short) any of those conspicuous accomplishments that are usually classed under the head of genius. He knew — he admitted — his parts to be pedestrian, but he had considered them (until quite lately) fully equal to the demands of life. And to-day he owned himself defeated: life had the upper hand; if there had been any means of flight or place to flee to, if the world had been so ordered that a man could leave it like a place of entertainment, Morris would have instantly resigned all further claim

on its rewards and pleasures, and, with inexpressible contentment, ceased to be. As it was, one aim shone before him: he could get home. Even as the sick dog crawls under the sofa, Morris could shut the door of John Street and be alone.

The dusk was falling when he drew near this place of refuge; and the first thing that met his eyes was the figure of a man upon the step, alternately plucking at the bell-handle and pounding on the panels. The man had no hat, his clothes were hideous with filth, he had the air of a hop-picker. Yet Morris knew him; it was John.

The first impulse of flight was succeeded, in the elder brother's bosom, by the empty quiescence of despair. "What does it matter now?" he thought, and drawing forth his latch-key ascended the steps.

John turned about; his face was ghastly with weariness, and dirt and fury; and as he recognised the head of his family, he drew in a long rasping breath, and his eyes glittered.

"Open that door," he said, standing back.

"I am going to," said Morris, and added, mentally, "he looks like murder!"

The brothers passed into the hall, the door closed behind them; and suddenly John seized Morris by the shoulders and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat. "You mangy little cad," he said, "I'd serve you right to smash your skull!" And shook him again, so that his teeth rattled and his head smote upon the wall.

"Don't be violent, Johnny," said Morris. "It can't do any good now."

"Shut your mouth," said John, "your time's come to listen."

He strode into the dining-room, fell into the easy-chair, and taking off one of his burst walking-shoes, nursed for awhile his foot like one in agony. "I'm lame for life," he said. "What is there for dinner?"

"Nothing, Johnny," said Morris.

"Nothing? What do you mean by that?" inquired the Great Vance. "Don't set up your cha to me!"

"I mean simply nothing," said his brother. "

ave nothing to eat, and nothing to buy it with. 've only had a cup of tea and a sandwich all this ay myself."

"Only a sandwich?" sneered Vance. "I sup-ose *you* 're going to complain next. But you had etter take care: I've had all I mean to take; nd I can tell you what it is, I mean to dine and to line well. Take your signets and sell them."

"I can't to-day," objected Morris, "it 's Sunday."

"I tell you I'm going to dine!" cried the ounger brother.

"But if it 's not possible, Johnny?" pleaded the ther.

"You nincompoop!" cried Vance. "Ain't we ouseholders? Don't they know us at that hotel where Uncle Parker used to come? Be off with ou; and if you ain't back in half an hour, and if he dinner ain't good, first I 'll lick you till you lon't want to breathe, and then I 'll go straight to he police and blow the gaff. Do you understand hat, Morris Finsbury? Because if you do you had etter jump."

The idea smiled even upon the wretched Morris, who was sick with famine. He sped upon his errand, and returned to find John still nursing his foot in the arm-chair.

"What would you like to drink, Johnny?" he inquired, soothingly.

"Fizz," said John. "Some of the poppy stuff from the end bin; a bottle of the old port that Michael liked, to follow; and see and don't shake the port. And look here, light the fire — and the gas, and draw down the blinds; it 's cold and it 's getting dark. And then you can lay the cloth. And, I say — here, you! bring me down some clothes."

The room looked comparatively habitable by the time the dinner came; and the dinner itself was good: strong gravy soup, filets of sole, mutton chops and tomato sauce, roast beef done rare with roast potatoes, cabinet pudding, a piece of Chester cheese, and some early celery: a meal uncompromisingly British, but supporting.

"Thank God!" said John, his nostrils sniffing wide, surprised by joy into the unwonted formal-

y of grace. "Now I 'm going to take this chair ith my back to the fire — there 's been a strong rost these two last nights, and I can't get it out of ny bones; the celery will be just the ticket — 'm going to sit here, and you are going to stand here, Morris Finsbury, and play butler."

"But, Johnny, I 'm so hungry myself," pleaded Morris.

"You can have what I leave," said Vance. You 're just beginning to pay your score, my aisy; I owe you one pound ten; don't you rouse he British lion!" There was something indescribbly menacing in the face and voice of the Great Vance as he uttered these words, at which the oul of Morris withered. "There!" resumed the easter, "give us a glass of the fizz to start with. Gravy soup! And I thought I did n't like gravy oup! Do you know how I got here?" he asked, vith another explosion of wrath.

"No, Johnny, how could I?" said the obsequius Morris.

"I walked on my ten toes!" cried John; tramped the whole way from Browndean; and

begged! I would like to see you beg. It 's not so easy as you might suppose. I played it on being a shipwrecked mariner from Blyth; I don't know where Blyth is, do you? but I thought it sounded natural. I begged from a little beast of a schoolboy, and he forked out a bit of twine, and asked me to make a clove-hitch; I did, too, I know I did, but he said it was n't, he said it was a granny's knot, and I was a what d' ye call 'em, and he would give me in charge. Then I begged from a naval officer — he never bothered me with knots, but he only gave me a tract; there 's a nice account of the British navy! — and then from a widow woman that sold lollipops, and I got a hunch of bread from her. Another party I fell in with said you could generally always get bread; and the thing to do was to break a plate-glass window and get into gaol; seemed rather a brilliant scheme. Pass the beef."

"Why did n't you stay at Browndean?" Morris ventured to inquire.

"Skittles!" said John. "On what? The *Pink Un* and a measly religious paper? I had to leave

rowndean; I had to, I tell you. I got tick at a ublic, and set up to be the Great Vance; so would ou, if you were leading such a beastly existence! nd a card stood me a lot of ale and stuff, and we ot swipey, talking about music-halls and the piles f tin I got for singing; and then they got me on o sing 'Around her splendid form I weaved the nagic circle,' and then he said I could n't be Vance, nd I stuck to it like grim death I was. It was ot of me to sing, of course, but I thought I could razen it out with a set of yokels. It settled my ash at the public," said John, with a sigh. "And hen the last thing was the carpenter ——"

"Our landlord?" inquired Morris.

"That 's the party," said John. "He came osing about the place, and then wanted to know here the water-butt was, and the bed-clothes. I old him to go to the devil; so would you too, hen there was no possible thing to say! And hen he said I had pawned them, and did I know was felony? Then I made a pretty neat stroke. remembered he was deaf, and talked a whole lot f rot, very politely, just so low he could n't hear

a word. 'I don't hear you,' says he. 'I know you don't, my buck, and I don't mean you to,' says I, smiling away like a haberdasher. 'I 'm hard of hearing,' he roars. 'I 'd be in a pretty hot corner if you were n't,' says I, making signs as if I was explaining everything. It was tip-top as long as it lasted. 'Well,' he said, 'I 'm deaf, worse luck, but I bet the constable can hear you.' And off he started one way, and I the other. They got a spirit-lamp, and the *Pink Un,* and that old religious paper, and another periodical you sent me. I think you must have been drunk — it had a name like one of those spots that Uncle Joseph used to hold forth at, and it was all full of the most awful swipes about poetry and the use of the globes. It was the kind of thing that nobody could read out of a lunatic asylum. The *Athenæum,* that was the name! Golly, what a paper!"

"*Athenæum,* you mean," said Morris.

"I don't care what you call it," said John, "so as I don't require to take it in! There, I feel better. Now I 'm going to sit by the fire in the easy-chair; pass me the cheese, and the celery

and the bottle of port — no, a champagne glass, it holds more. And now you can pitch in, there 's some of the fish left, and a chop, and some fizz. Ah," sighed the refreshed pedestrian, " Michael was right about that port; there 's old and vatted for you! Michael 's a man I like; he 's clever and reads books, and the *Athæneum,* and all that; but he 's not dreary to meet, he don't talk *Athæneum* like the other parties; why, the most of them would throw a blight over a skittle alley! Talking of Michael, I ain't bored myself to put the question, because of course I knew it from the first. You 've made a hash of it, eh? "

" Michael made a hash of it," said Morris, flushing dark.

" What have we got to do with that? " inquired John.

" He has lost the body, that 's what we have to do with it," cried Morris. " He has lost the body, and the death can't be established."

" Hold on," said John. " I thought you did n't want to? "

" Oh, we 're far past that," said his brother.

"It 's not the tontine now, it 's the leather business, Johnny; it 's the clothes upon our back."

"Stow the slow music," said John, "and tell your story from beginning to end."

Morris did as he was bid.

"Well, now, what did I tell you?" cried the Great Vance, when the other had done. "But I know one thing; I 'm not going to be humbugged out of my property."

"I should like to know what you mean to do," said Morris.

"I 'll tell you that," responded John, with extreme decision. "I 'm going to put my interests in the hands of the smartest lawyer in London; and whether you go to quod or not is a matter of indifference to me."

"Why, Johnny, we 're in the same boat!" expostulated Morris.

"Are we?" cried his brother. "I bet we 're not! Have I committed forgery? have I lied about Uncle Joseph? have I put idiotic advertisements in the comic papers? have I smashed other people's statues? I like your cheek, Morris Finsbury.

o, I 've let you run my affairs too long; now ey shall go to Michael. I like Michael, anyway; nd it 's time I understood my situation."

At this moment the brethren were interrupted y a ring at the bell, and Morris going timorously o the door, received from the hands of a commis- onnaire a letter addressed in the hand of Michael. s contents ran as follows:

"MORRIS FINSBURY, if this should meet the eye of, he ill hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE at my office, in hancery Lane, at 10 A. M. to-morrow.

"MICHAEL FINSBURY."

So utter was Morris's subjection that he did not ait to be asked, but handed the note to John as oon he had glanced at it himself.

"That 's the way to write a letter," cried John. Nobody but Michael could have written that."

And Morris did not even claim the credit of iority.

CHAPTER XVI

FINAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE LEATHER BUSINESS

FINSBURY brothers were ushered, at ten the next morning, into a large apartment in Michael's office; the Great Vance, somewhat restored from yesterday's exhaustion, but with one foot in a slipper; Morris, not positively damaged, but a man ten years older than he who had left Bournemouth eight days before, his face ploughed full of anxious wrinkles, his dark hair liberally grizzled at the temples.

Three persons were seated at a table to receive them: Michael in the midst, Gideon Forsyth at his right hand, on his left an ancient gentleman with spectacles and silver hair.

"By Jings, it 's Uncle Joe!" cried John.

But Morris approached his uncle with a pale countenance and glittering eyes.

"I 'll tell you what you did!" he cried. "You bsconded!"

"Good-morning, Morris Finsbury," returned oseph, with no less asperity; "you are looking eriously ill."

"No use making trouble now," remarked Michael. "Look the facts in the face. Your uncle, s you see, was not so much as shaken in the accident; a man of your humane disposition ought to e delighted."

"Then, if that 's so," Morris broke forth, "how bout the body? You don't mean to insinuate that hing I schemed and sweated for, and colported vith my own hands, was the body of a total tranger?"

"Oh, no, we can't go as far as that," said Michael, soothingly; "you may have met him at he club."

Morris fell into a chair. "I would have ound it out if it had come to the house," he omplained. "And why did n't it? why did go to Pitman? what right had Pitman to pen it?"

"If you come to that, Morris, what have you done with the colossal Hercules?" asked Michael.

"He went through it with the meat-axe," said John. "It 's all in spillikens in the back garden."

"Well, there 's one thing," snapped Morris; "there 's my uncle again, my fraudulent trustee. He 's mine, anyway. And the tontine, too. I claim the tontine; I claim it now. I believe Uncle Masterman 's dead."

"I must put a stop to this nonsense," said Michael, "and that for ever. You say too near the truth. In one sense your uncle is dead, and has been so long; but not in the sense of the tontine, which it is even on the cards he may yet live to win. Uncle Joseph saw him this morning; he will tell you he still lives, but his mind is in abeyance."

"He did not know me," said Joseph; to do him justice, not without emotion.

"So you 're out again there, Morris," said John. "My eye, what a fool you 've made of yourself!"

"And that was why you would n't compromise," said Morris.

"As for the absurd position in which you and Uncle Joseph have been making yourselves an exhibition," resumed Michael, "it is more than time it came to an end. I have prepared a proper discharge in full, which you shall sign as a preliminary."

"What!" cried Morris, "and lose my seven thousand eight hundred pounds, and the leather business, and the contingent interest, and get nothing? Thank you!"

"It 's like you to feel gratitude, Morris," began Michael.

"Oh, I know it 's no good appealing to you, you sneering devil!" cried Morris. "But there 's a stranger present, I can't think why, and I appeal to him. I was robbed of this money when I was an orphan, a mere child, at a commercial academy. Since then I 've never had a wish but to get back my own. You may hear a lot of stuff about me; and there 's no doubt at times I have been ill advised. But it 's the pathos of my situation; that 's what I want to show you."

"Morris," interrupted Michael, "I do wish you

would let me add one point, for I think it will affect your judgment. It 's pathetic too — since that 's your taste in literature."

"Well, what is it?" said Morris.

"It 's only the name of one of the persons who 's to witness your signature, Morris," replied Michael. "His name 's Moss, my dear."

There was a long silence. "I might have been sure it was you!" cried Morris.

"You 'll sign, won't you?" said Michael.

"Do you know what you 're doing?" cried Morris. "You 're compounding a felony."

"Very well, then, we won't compound it, Morris," returned Michael. "See how little I understood the sterling integrity of your character! I thought you would prefer it so."

"Look here, Michael," said John, "this is all very fine and large; but how about me? Morris is gone up, I see that; but I 'm not. And I was robbed too, mind you; and just as much an orphan, and at the blessed same academy as himself."

"Johnny," said Michael, "don't you think you 'd better leave it to me?"

"I 'm your man," said John. "You would n't eceive a poor orphan, I 'll take my oath. Morris, ou sign that document, or I 'll start in and astonish our weak mind."

With a sudden alacrity, Morris proffered his villingness; clerks were brought in; the discharge vas executed; and there was Joseph a free man nce more.

"And now," said Michael, "hear what I pro- ose to do. Here, John and Morris, is the leather usiness made over to the pair of you in partner- hip; I have valued it at the lowest possible figure, Pogram and Jarris's. And here is a cheque for ne balance of your fortune. Now you see, Morris, ou start fresh from the Commercial Academy; nd as you said yourself the leather business was ooking up, I suppose you 'll probably marry be- ore long. Here 's your marriage present; from Mr. Moss."

Morris bounded on his check with a crimsoned ountenance.

"I don't understand the performance," remarked ohn. . "It seems too good to be true."

"It 's simply a re-adjustment," Michael explained. "I take up Uncle Joseph's liabilities; and if he gets the tontine, it 's to be mine. If my father gets it, it 's mine anyway, you see. So that I 'm rather advantageously placed."

"Morris, my unconverted friend, you 've got left," was John's comment.

"And now, Mr. Forsyth," resumed Michael, turning to his silent guest, "here are all the criminals before you, except Pitman. I really did n't like to interrupt his scholastic career; but you can have him arrested at the Seminary: I know his hours. Here we are, then; we 're not pretty to look at; what do you propose to do with us?"

"Nothing in the world, Mr. Finsbury," returned Gideon. "I seem to understand that this gentleman" — indicating Morris — "is the *fons et origo* of the trouble; and from what I gather, he has already paid through the nose. And really, to be quite frank, I do not see who is to gain by any scandal; not I, at least. And besides, I have to thank you for that brief."

Michael blushed. "It was the least I could do to let you have some business," he said. "But there 's one thing more. I don't want you to misjudge poor Pitman, who is the most harmless being upon earth; I wish you would dine with me to-night, and see the creature on his native heath — say, at Verrey's?"

"I have no engagement, Mr. Finsbury," replied Gideon. "I shall be delighted. But — subject to your judgment — can we do nothing for the man in the cart? I have qualms of conscience."

"Nothing but sympathise," said Michael.

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